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The Politics of the People of God

How Religious Identity and Threat Structure Political Attitudes

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The Politics of the People of God

How Religious Identity and Threat Structure Political Attitudes

by

Jerod Thomas Patterson

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For Sara, whose generosity of time is surpassed only by generosity of spirit.

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The Politics of the People of God

How Religious Identity and Threat Structure Political Attitudes

by

Jerod Thomas Patterson, Ph.D.

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This dissertation examines how religious group identity and the perception of threat toward one's religious group affect political attitudes. Drawing on social identity theory, it argues that religion is a meaningful social category to which individuals can develop a psychological attachment. This enables individuals to locate themselves within their social and political contexts, and also to perceive threats to their religious group, which can elevate the salience of their religious identity and alter religion's causal impact on politics. This amends the literature's predominant understanding of religion's politically relevant facets by accounting for religion as a social identity. This also enables a more dynamic conceptualization of religion as responsive to changing circumstances in the political environment.

Among the dissertation's contributions, it develops reliable survey measures of religious identity. Using these measures, it establishes the relationship between religious identity and threat, showing threat and religious identity to have independent and statistically significant effects on political attitudes. It also finds threat to have a moderating effect on religious identity, which matters more for those with weaker religious identities than for those with stronger ones. Finally, it finds that the moderating

effect of threat on religious identity among Republicans (as with the general population) is felt the strongest by those with weaker religious identities and decreases in magnitude as religious identity strengthens. However, the inverse is true for Democrats, with threat's greatest moderating effect being seen among those with stronger religious identities.

By viewing religion as a social identity, this dissertation explores the social and cognitive processes that make religion such a powerful political force, which helps to better explain the political consequences of religious division during a time of growing religious pluralism and demographic change.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Theory

"It Just Feels Less Christian"

Mount Airy, North Carolina Mayor David Rowe got his man, as he shared with a *Washington Post* reporter about why Donald Trump received such strong support from rural towns like his during the 2016 presidential election. "We try to live the good old days, but it's hard," Rowe said. "Now it's about secular progressivism, not the values you get out of this book," he explained while tapping the leather-bound Bible atop his office desk. Another Mount Airy resident echoed the mayor's sentiment, "We're losing control of our freedoms…. The government was taking away our rights. Taxes are higher, our jobs are gone, and it just feels less Christian" (Bailey 2017).

It just feels less Christian. This is not an uncommon sentiment, especially among conservative Christians (e.g., Hunter 1983; Smith 1998). The words of these Mount Airy residents are thick with meaning. They evidence a deep and personal identification with a particular expression of Christianity. They offer political analysis and social commentary that is thoroughly shaped by an experience of religion. They have a kind of ominous overtone of existential threat to their religious worldview and the social context that it helped to form. The irony is not lost that Mount Airy is the town on which Andy Griffith based his fictional Mayberry.

In this dissertation, I argue that religion to individuals such as these is more than an affiliation, or a set of beliefs, or even habitual behaviors like praying and attending church. Rather, religion is also a social identity that forms when someone self-categorizes

with a social group to a such a degree that their identity as a group member also shapes their identity as a person. Like other social identities, this religious identity is sensitive to threats to the group. In these pages, I explore the idea of religion as a social identity and how individuals viewing themselves among a particular "people of God" can affect the structure of their political attitudes and inform our understandings of religion's causal impact on politics.

Is America really less Christian? The notion has perceptible albeit not dramatic empirical support. According to the General Social Survey (GSS), only 7% of Americans were religiously unaffiliated in 1973 compared with 17% in 2008. Mainline Protestants experienced the biggest decline over this period of time as a proportion of the nation's population, with their share dropping more than half from about 28% to just 13%. This isn't entirely due to attrition. There has been a modest slump in the raw number of Americans who affiliate with historic mainline denominations, but the nation's larger demographic trends have also watered down the position of these largely white denominations. Roman Catholics now comprise a larger proportion of the population, propelled especially by Latino population growth. Evangelical Protestant affiliation remains roughly stable at just less than a quarter of the population in 2008, nearly unchanged from 1973 (Smith et al. 1973; 2008). Non-Christian traditions have experienced a very slight, almost imperceptible uptick. By far, the largest non-Christian movement has been the rise in unaffiliated Americans. This does not mean a rise in atheist or agnostic belief. Rather, a significant number of these are people whom Hout and Fischer (2002) would term "unchurched believers." While not affiliating with Christianity per se, they still reflect some of its religious sensibilities.

Looking strictly at religious affiliation and church attendance, one could make the case that America is marginally less Christian. However, in their extensive study of American religion and public life, Putnam and Campbell (2010) reveal a more nuanced and muddled picture. While affiliation and attendance have waned, many of those who now "demur from indicating a formal religious affiliation [still] believe religion is important, pray regularly, and even attend a given congregation on occasion" (176). These kinds of distinctives are most noticeable when evaluating generational differences. Putnam and Campbell found that a significant number of younger Americans are reticent to embrace their parents' religious expressions due to, among other reasons, their political overtones. Since the 1970s, traditional views of gender roles and human sexuality have ebbed across the board among Americans, including evangelical Christians who have historically championed such views in both the pulpit and the public square. This is most noticeable among younger cohorts, who prefer religious expressions that are less defined by moral traditionalism. As a result, "roughly half of white Americans have departed from their parents' religious stance, either through switching to a different religious tradition or through lapsing" (159).

This reflects more fundamental changes afoot in America's religious landscape. American society is not so much less religious as it is religious in different ways than before (Finke and Stark 2005; Putnam and Campbell 2010). Religions are more integrated than just a few decades ago. Americans are far less likely to inherit their religious preferences and more likely to change religious denominations than ever before. A person's engagement with religious faith may not be defined by a particular religious denomination, or even by organized religion at all, as demonstrated by the emerging

segment of the population that identifies as "spiritual but not religious." Younger Christians have drifted toward religious expressions that are less exclusivist and more self-consciously pluralist in their relationship to other traditions and society as a whole.

There is a great deal more self-sorting in the religious landscape than ever before, and politics is a factor in that process. As Putnam and Campbell explain, interreligious marriage and a rise of religious switching and churning may have made American religion more integrated, but the self-selection process has also created a more ideologically polarized religious landscape:

> people (especially young people) have increasingly sorted themselves out religiously according to their moral and political views, leaving both the liberal, secular pole and the conservative, evangelical pole strengthened and the moderate religious middle seriously weakened. Religious polarization has increasingly aligned Americans' religious affiliations with their political inclinations. (132)

It is therefore understandable that the reporter's interview subjects in Mount Airy, North Carolina, view their social and political surroundings as "less Christian," particularly if their experience of Christianity binds together religious faith and practice with a certain set of social and political attitudes. As the mayor explained, he sees young people leave for college and come back with more progressive, secular views. From his perspective, the political left represents more than a political ideology with which he disagrees; it is a threat to the Christian faith. Sociologist Christian Smith (1998) identified a sense of existential threat toward their religious group as a common feature of American evangelicalism, ranging from a basic sense of displaced heritage or second-class citizenship in an American society that "is now turning its back on its Judeo-Christian

roots" (136) to a more serious fear of "increasingly powerful, organized groups in America with clearly anti-Christian agendas" (142).

While Smith's research focused on evangelicals, other religious groups also experience threat within the political environment. Minority religious groups including Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and atheists experienced various forms of discrimination that eventuated in some of the nation's most cited case law on the establishment and free exercise of religion. Muslim-Americans have had particular difficulty finding political welcome in the U.S. In Texas, for example, one state lawmaker singled out Muslim visitors to pledge allegiance to the United States in order to visit her capitol office, also writing, "I did leave an Israeli flag on the reception desk…. We will see how long they stay in my office" (Hamilton and Ura 2015).

This dissertation aims to understand the political consequences of situations like these. How does an individual's identification with a religious group shape one's political attitudes, and how might that be affected by the experience or perception of threat? Group identity and threat are closely related concepts. The experience of political threat typically occurs via reference groups, since the collective action incentives of democratic politics lead individuals to understand interests in terms of groups. As Smith (1998) explains, "the human drives for meaning and belonging are satisfied primarily by locating human selves within social groups that sustain distinctive, morally orienting collective identities" (90). A salient group identity provides a medium through which an individual can perceive a policy as threatening one's interests or wellbeing. When this occurs, a group identity can take on a heightened level of political relevance, termed "group consciousness" in some literatures.

Several studies have demonstrated the political consequences of group identity and threat, especially work on race (Matthews and Prothro 1966; Gurin et al. 1980; Miller et al. 1981; Conover 1988; Dawson 1994; Chong and Rogers 2005) and national identity (Huddy 2003; Huddy et al. 2005). However, religion remains largely neglected by the growing body of political research on group identity and threat, even though research also shows that Americans are increasingly divided along religious lines (Layman and Carmines 1997; Layman 2001). Consequently, religion provides an auspicious opportunity to expand our knowledge about the ways in which group identity and threat affect politics and policy in the United States.

If religion is a meaningful group identity, its role in structuring political attitudes should account for the social psychological processes involved with an individual's identification with a religious group. Previous studies of religion and politics have identified three dimensions of religion's political relevance. These include religious affiliation, religious belief, and religious practice, often referred to as the "three Bs," belonging, believing, and behaving (Kellstedt et al. 1996; Layman 1997; 2001; Green 2007; Olson and Warber 2008; Smidt et al. 2009). However, none of these account for psychological identification with one's religious group. This informs the first of my dissertation's overarching hypotheses:

H1: Group identity is a politically relevant dimension of the way in which religion structures political attitudes.

From this perspective, religion not only provides adherents with a particular set of orienting beliefs about life's deepest questions, but also a social group from which self-

conception may be derived (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel 1981; Conover 1988; Brewer 2001; Huddy 2001). The linkage of self-conception to group processes highlights religion's capacity to forge a distinction between "us" and "them." This distinction enables an assessment of whether a policy benefits or adversely affects one's group. When a policy appears to pose or cause disadvantage, it can elicit a sense of threat. Research on race, terrorism, and nationalism has found that perceived threat to one's social group leads to more extreme preferences for policies that relate to the threat (Jentleson 1992; Jentleson and Britton 1998; Herrmann, Tetlock, and Visser 1999; Huddy et al. 2005). This informs my second overarching hypothesis:

H2: If religion is a salient group identity for an individual, the perception of threat to one's religious group will lead to more extreme policy preferences.

These hypotheses frame an exploration of the relationship between threat and religious group identity in the formation of policy attitudes.

This dissertation examines these hypotheses through original survey and experimental research that develops and assesses quantitative measures of religious group identity and examines the impact of religious identity and threat on policy attitudes. This promises several research contributions. First, it yields data on religious group identity and develops measures that can be used in future research. Second, its focus on religious group identity and perceived threat as determinants of political attitudes explores a previously understudied dimension of religion's political relevance. Third, while current political research on religion tends to focus on specific religious groups, this project seeks to develop a richer theoretical understanding of the social and psychological forces that

shape religion's political effect. Fourth, this informs our understanding of group identity and threat in politics more generally by bringing religion together with research on other social identities. Much of our current political understanding of group identity and threat emerges from studies of race and national identity. Religion offers an ideal opportunity to extend this research to a new area of study and develop more general theories.

This research is particularly important during a time in which the United States grows more religiously diverse. The power of religion to motivate attitudes and behaviors has become increasingly evident, especially in the years since September 11, 2001. Religious cleavages play a conspicuous role in some of America's most controversial policy debates, many of which involve fundamental questions of political rights that directly affect individual lives and liberties. Religion has also featured prominently in the common narratives about many national elections circa the 1970s forward. Religious pluralism and social change exacerbate the relevance of these religious cleavages, challenging the political trust and liberal values that maintain democratic stability in the United States.

At present, political science lacks a thorough rendering of the way in which religion structures political attitudes and affects public debate. This dissertation examines how the relationship between individuals and their religion affects their relationship to politics. By viewing religion as a social identity, it explores the cognitive processes that make religion such a powerful political force. This benefits society by expanding our knowledge of the political consequences of religious division during a time of growing religious pluralism and demographic change, and open new possibilities for public

conversation on the role of religion in an increasingly diverse and globally connected society.

American Exceptionalism

Context matters, especially in social science. Almost any examination of religion and politics in the United States would do well to account for the exceptional nature of its religious landscape vis-à-vis most Western counterparts, as is certainly the case here. This section presents social scientific and historical explanations for the unique relationship that exists between religion and politics in the U.S., which underlies the central questions of this study.

Social observers, public intellectuals, and researchers alike have long noted the prominence of religion in American public life. Tocqueville ([1835] 2000) was struck by this religiosity in his reflections on American democracy:

> On my arrival in the United States it was the religious aspect of the country that first struck my eye. As I prolonged my stay, I perceived the great political consequences that flowed from these new facts. (282)

Since at least the 18th Century, Europe's leading secular philosophers and thinkers have predicted that the Enlightenment's entrance onto the stage of human thought would inevitably lead to religion's exit (e.g., Woolston, Comte, Engels, Nietzsche, Freud; see Stark 1999 for discussion). Thomas Jefferson did not necessarily view religion or theism *in toto* as incongruous with the modern future, but still opined, "there is not a young man now living in the United States who will not die a Unitarian" (Healy 1984, 373; see also

Stark 1999). For his part, Tocqueville ([1835] 2000, 282) could find no evidence of secularization whatsoever in the United States, writing:

> the facts do not accord with this theory. There is a certain European population whose disbelief is equaled only by their brutishness and ignorance, whereas in America one sees one of the freest and most enlightened peoples in the world eagerly fulfill all the external duties of religion.

Modern sociology nonetheless coalesced around the idea, led by its founding figures. As Weber ([1922] 1946, 155) aptly summarized:

> The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the disenchantment of the world. . . . One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service.

Or, more poetically by Durkheim, "the former gods are growing old or dying, and others have not been born" (Durkheim 1912, 429). Berger (1967) reflects the common sociological sentiment of the middle 20th Century, arguing that religion was undergoing a process of losing its plausibility structure as "sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols" (107). The modern world no longer required religion to play a legitimating function like a sacred canopy over all human society.

However, by the 1970s and 80s, American society and politics had yet to bear out the prognostications of, by that point, several centuries of thinkers. Quite to the contrary, the 1976 presidential election saw the election of a self-proclaimed evangelical Christian,

Jimmy Carter, to the Presidency—a man who just eight years earlier spent entire weeks in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts knocking on doors to invite strangers into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Balmer 2014). During the 1976 election, it is little wonder that Southern Baptist preacher Bailey Smith used his keynote address to the denomination's annual convention to beseech his fellow religionists that, while he could not tell them for whom to vote, America "needs a born again man in the White House" and "his initials are the same as our Lord's" (Williams 2010, 125). Such events led *Newsweek* to declare 1976 "the year of the evangelical."

Many evangelicals supported Carter's election but grew disenchanted with an administration they perceived to ignore their policy priorities and preferences, especially on social issues. This did not dissuade them from their newfound political interest, though. Rather, they mobilized with even greater force in advance of the 1980 election to displace Carter in favor of Ronald Reagan. With the aid of newly established, politically oriented para-church organizations, such as the Moral Majority, evangelicals flexed their religious muscle as the new 800-pound gorilla in America's public square. These groups exerted significant influence over policymakers as grassroots lobbyists in the decades that followed. Electorally, this same sector of the electorate would again get their man, so to speak, with the 2000 election of George W. Bush, who famously proclaimed Jesus Christ to be his favorite political philosopher during a nationally televised primary debate, "because he changed my heart." Bush was not shy about his evangelical faith, a fact that filmmaker Oliver Stone satirized as a political vow to never be "out Texan'd or out Christian'd."

Sociologist James Davison Hunter found numerous examples of religious voices and argumentation among the most prominent and controversial public policy debates beginning in roughly the 1970s. Especially striking to him was the coalescence of evangelical Protestants and conservative Roman Catholics and Jews into a political force in elections and on social policy issues. Hunter was most intrigued by this alliance, which American political history suggests as strange bedfellows. Not only had these groups seldom allied in matters of public life, their relationship in the not too distant past would have more likely been characterized by animosity if not bloodshed. Now, they joined together in marches and campaigns, and organized together for the election of conservative Republican candidates, the appointment of conservative federal judges, and the passage of socially conservative legislation (Hunter 1991).

While among the loudest, these were certainly not the only religious voices to have crowded the public square over the latter half of the 20th Century. It is impossible to make even a cursory examination of religion in American politics during this time without also noting the profound imprint of religion on the Civil Rights Movement and its work in the American South. Some of the Movement's most prominent leaders and organizers were pastors of African American Protestant churches. The Black Church offered, at the very least, an informal organizational structure and the opportunity to gain the requisite civic skills to engineer a social movement. Moreover, the spirituality of the Black Church lent powerful themes, imagery, and stamina to the Movement. As Rev. Andrew Young explained, "Ours was an evangelical freedom movement that identified with not just one's personal relationship with God, but a new relationship between people black and white" (Harvey 2005, 169; also Young 2008).

We might expect nothing less from one of the most religious demographic groups in American society, with upwards of 80% of Black Church affiliates reporting to pray daily according to the Pew Research Center's most recent Religious Landscape Survey (Pew Research Center 2014). Moreover, many Black Church clergypersons and congregants view political involvement as a religious imperative. As Fowler et al. (2010) argue, "African American Christianity in the United States today is self consciously political" (284). Research has also shown religion to be a meaningful political determinant for Latinos, e.g., leading to increased political participation (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001; Leal 2007; 2010). Although diverse religious affiliations, national origins, and immigrant status make for a more complex story.

My intended point, here, is not an exhaustive demonstration of religion in American public life, but to point out that America was and remains an outlier for the secularization thesis. Contrary to a great deal of social science in the 1960s, Tocqueville's words have never seemed truer, "the facts do not accord with this theory." The U.S. has not followed the pattern set by most of its Western peers. Berger eventually agreed, as did many others, that the secularization pattern simply did not hold in the U.S. (Berger, Davie, and Fokas 2008; also Stark 1999). There is something peculiar about religion and its relationship with civic and political life in the U.S., a conclusion that Tocqueville had reached a century and a half earlier.

By the 1990s, market theories of religion presented an alternative explanation for religion's continued prominence in American society (e.g., Iannaccone 1994; Stark 1999; Finke and Stark 2005). Pluralism and disestablishment in America provided an opportunity for religious entrepreneurs to populate a marketplace, so to speak, with a vast

and diverse supply of religious options to meet society's demand for otherworldly compensators. Given this supply of religious options, market actors have ample opportunity to find avenues of religious expression that meet their personal preferences. In contrast, the vitality of religion in Europe (or lack thereof) reflects a history in which state churches, absent the same kind of competitive forces and entrepreneurial atmosphere, produced ultimately less robust options and less appealing brands. In other words, Europe's religious marketplace does not reflect a lack of demand so much as inadequate supply.

In this market account, the separation of church and state in the U.S. has proven the great innovation that spurred the development of such an exceptional religious landscape. The ratification of the U.S. Constitution marked the first time in Western history that the foundational document of a nation's political order severed the tie between religion and the state. This was not without contention or without angst on the part of some religious leaders. By 1833, with the disestablishment of the Congregational Church in Massachusetts, no official state privilege for religious remained in the U.S. Connecticut's Lyman Beecher, a prominent Presbyterian minister, feared the worst, believing that religion's role in society was too great to be relegated to purely voluntary status. Though, his tune was soon a very different following the Second Great Awakening, calling disestablishment:

> the best thing that ever happened to the State of Connecticut. It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God…. They say ministers have lost their influence; the fact is, they have gained. By voluntary efforts, societies, missions, and revivals, they

> exert a deeper influence than ever they could by queues, and shoe-buckles, and cocked hats, and gold-headed cane.[1] (Gaustad and Noll 2003, 300)

Historian Frank Lambert (2008, 42) further explains:

> The biggest change was in the ministers' industry; they began to preach and build churches with an energy never before seen in the [preceding years of state privilege]. The animosity between established and dissenting congregations evaporated because all were now on the same footing. The new unity manifested itself in a concerted attack against infidels, especially through an evangelical revival that enjoyed widespread support among most denominations.[2]

Indeed, an open marketplace proved highly propitious for the development of religion in America. Not only did it promote evangelical awakening, it led to remarkable religious innovation with a host of "Made in America" sects, like the Mormons, Shakers, Jehovah's Witnesses, millenarian offshoots, restoration movements, utopian movements, and seekers of ecstatic experience. Upstate New York saw so many revival and new religious movements during the early and mid 19th Century, it became known as the "burned-over district;" simply put, no more fuel, i.e., unconverted souls, remained. Each in their own way, these sects engaged their adherents in doing battle with secular ills, some through withdrawal and others through engagement. Smith (1998) explicates a "subcultural identity theory" of religion, demonstrating how a sense of minority status

[1] Beecher contrasts voluntary religion over and against emblems of traditional authority.

[2] For the authoritative account of the rise of voluntary religion in the U.S., see Nathan Hatch's (1989) *The Democratization of American Christianity*.

and embattlement with broader society and the secular world can propel a religious group to thrive.

In sum, America is a nation of religious consumers with a higher than normal demand for religious options relative to the balance of the Western world. This relates to its vast and differentiated religious supply, thanks to a longstanding culture of innovation and disestablishment. If these features comprise the *structure* of America's exceptional religious landscape, its *ethos* is just as exceptional. From the earliest colonists, religion has provided a powerful orienting vision for American public life.

"A City Upon a Hill"

In 1630, a band of some 700 English Puritans set sail across the Atlantic to establish a New England, fueled by their collective desire for a political order in which true Christianity might be modeled for the world. Aboard their flagship vessel, the *Arbella*, John Winthrop presented a bold vision for their experiment in the form of a sermon, birthed out of competing desires for religious dissent but also conformity. They wished to dissent, in conscience, from what they viewed as a Church of England that had strayed too far from the purity of the Christian gospel. Yet they desired conformity within their ranks to a new religious and political arrangement, built around their own interpretation of a Christian vision for a well-functioning society. Winthrop preached:

> For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have

> undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world. (Griffith 2007, 18)

The novelty of the enterprise was clearly on Winthrop's mind, as was its consequence.

> Thus stands the cause between God and us. We are entered into covenant with Him for this work. We have taken out a commission. The Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles…. [But] if we shall neglect the observation of these articles which are the ends we have propounded, and, dissembling with our God, shall fall to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnal intentions, seeking great things for ourselves and our posterity, the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us, and be revenged of such a people, and make us know the price of the breach of such a covenant. (19)

In their minds, they had the problems of the Church of England fully diagnosed. Bad theology, political enmeshment, and moral laxity had converged like a perfect storm to compromise the English church's ability to serve as a sure rudder amidst the world's tempestuous sea. And the sea was indeed tempestuous. For decades, the English throne and ecclesiastical leadership were tossed about like badminton shuttlecocks, volleying between Catholic and Protestant, high and low church sensibilities, competing political loyalties, and varying perspectives on tolerance and conformity. From the Puritan perspective, drastic action was necessary to restore truth and stability to the church.

The common story goes that Winthrop's Puritans fled England for North America to secure the requisite liberty to worship and practice their religion as they saw fit. This is about half right. They were absolutely insular in belief and custom, physically separating from England and closely monitoring standards of conduct and belief among themselves.

But their vision for this enterprise was not so provincial. They were founders and dreamers whose concerns were global as much as local. They sought nothing less than the renewal of the Christian church, first embodied in their little commonwealth and then to England and onto the world. They would bear witness, through personal piety and social concord, as a model Christian society. Through this witness, they would transform political realities as onlookers "shall say of succeeding plantations, 'may the Lord make it like that of New England'" (Griffith 2007, 19).

Winthrop's sermon aboard the *Arbella*, "A Model of Christian Charity," was not simply a final exhortation before disembarking at Massachusetts Bay. In the immediate sense, it offered his people a brief but full-throated political theology for a Christian commonwealth. But in the larger context of history, it offers much more; something perhaps obscured by the failure of the Puritan project. By the second generation, doctrinal compromises were already necessary to shore up lagging membership (and the Puritan faith's political dominance). Winthrop's Puritans never built their city upon a hill, but in some key ways they nonetheless influenced the development of American religion and its unique place in the nation's democratic life.

The Puritan project represents one of the earliest expressions of the ethos of American exceptionalism. Winthrop and his fellow colonists believed themselves to be on a divinely ordained mission as instruments in the redemption of the English church and society. In subsequent years, America's leading theologians would eschew much of Winthrop's humility and more directly identify America with God's intentions in the world. In a sermon titled "The Latter-Day Glory Is Probably to Begin in America," Jonathan Edwards opined that America might be the locus of the eschatological new

heavens and new earth spoken of in Christian theology. Still others in the founding era referred to America as a New Israel or New Zion.

This theology evolved into a civil religion that invested national ends with a sense of divine ordination, from independence to manifest destiny to wars and policy agendas, both domestic and international. Thomas Jefferson provides one of the clearest examples of this narrative, suggesting "a representation of the children of Israel in the wilderness, led by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night" for the national seal (Novak 2002). Ernest Tuveson (1968) referred to this sentiment as a belief in America as a "redeemer nation," which he explains as, "chosen race, chosen nation; millennial-utopian destiny for mankind; a continuing war between good (progress) and evil (reaction) in which the United States is to play a starring role as world redeemer" (viii).

The theme of America as a city upon a hill also demonstrates that the central questions of this dissertation run deep within the nation's soul. The experience of religious threat drove America's earliest religious innovators to entrepreneur a political order in which they could pursue their spiritual vision for human relationships with one another and with God. However, while they found creative space in America for their own experiment they also replicated the same tension between dominion and pluralism that caused the experience of religious threat that eventuated in their transatlantic journey to begin with. Nonconformists like Anne Hutchinson were banished. Puritans hanged the convinced Quaker, Mary Dyer, in Boston Common. This tension between dominion and pluralism would lead Roger Williams to found Rhode Island as "a shelter for persons distressed for conscience," and the Mormons to embark on a Westward journey. It would lead Roman Catholic Bishop John Hughes to challenge New York's anti-Catholic

education policies and post armed guards at church to protect his immigrant flock from Nativist uprisings. It would inspire epic court battles originating in places like Dayton, Tennessee; Champaign, Illinois; and Abingdon, Pennsylvania, that would shape and reshape the contours of state expressions of religion in the U.S. It would arouse high profile policy battles and motivate vote choices and political engagement for everyday Americans in such places as Mount Airy, North Carolina.

Social science and history demonstrate that both the structure and ethos of America's religious landscape lend to an enduring and meaningful political cleavage that is defined by the relationships within and between religious groups and their broader society. As new chapters in American history are written, our ability to understand the impact of religion on the nation's democratic life will hinge on an adequate understanding of these relationships. By focusing on the understudied facets of religious group identity and threat, this dissertation seeks to promote a more thorough rendering of how religion structures the political attitudes of Americans.

Theoretical Foundations

Political science has long noted the political relevance of the many groups to which people belong (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944; Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960). While the nature and meaning of these groups has provided its share of disagreements, few would deny the formative role they play in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of their members. Americans are members of many different groups: race, gender, class, region, religion, sexual orientation, age, occupation, party affiliation, and on and on.

Indeed, political science regularly accounts for these distinctions. However, these groups do not stand on equal footing in an individual's mind. When it comes to politics, some groups are more salient than others. They also operate differently in terms of how they impart values, convey meaning, affect cognition, and ultimately influence the way people believe and act.

Attachment to groups exists in gradations. While Americans are members of many groups, they only identify with some. Group membership is often based on ascription, especially by social scientists who seek to parse group differences. Group membership can provide descriptive insight but not necessarily account for causation. McClain et al. (2009) explain that membership does not necessarily entail broader social or cultural values that may or may not be universally held by individual members. That is rather the domain of group identity. In contrast to group membership, group identity implies a psychological attachment to a group rooted in a shared social experience with other group members (Gurin et al. 1980; Miller et al. 1981; Chong and Rogers 2005; McClain et al. 2009). Perhaps no area of scholarship has explicated this distinction more than the area of race.

Race has dominated the study of groups in the U.S. The majority of this work has looked at group identity among African Americans. This area of research has produced a variety of conceptualizations and measures of racial identity. Some studies locate group identity in the degree of closeness an individual feels towards others of one's race (e.g., Matthews and Prothro 1966). Others consider racial identity as a "multidimensional construct" (e.g., Miller et al. 1981; McClain et al. 2009). In this, racial group identity emerges not only out of the closeness a person feels toward others of their race, but also

the variety of ways in which racial distinctions contribute to one's life experience, including cultural, social, political, and psychological elements.

Scholars have also found that racial identity can become politicized. Here, group members not only sense a psychological attachment to their racial group, but also hold a shared set of political interests based on a common assessment of the group's social status and believe that these interests can be advanced through collective action (Gurin et al. 1980; Miller et al. 1981; Conover 1988; Dawson 1994; Chong and Rogers 2005). This politicized group identity is often referred to as "group consciousness," to emphasize that group members are actively conscious of their status as a group member and their group's social status vis-à-vis society as a whole (e.g., Miller et al. 1981).

Linked fate is one particular manifestation of group consciousness, where group members view their personal interests as inextricably bound up with those of their racial group generally (Dawson 1994). This is often assessed through the question: "Do you think what happens generally to black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?" Linked fate offers the benefit of encapsulating multiple dimensions of group identity and consciousness into a single concept and measurement. However, it is not synonymous with group consciousness. While emerging from a strong group consciousness, linked fate specifically implies the presence of a heuristic where group interests serve as a proxy for individual ones. Group consciousness, more generally, refers to the political relevance of a salient group identity. Still, the use of these concepts, terms, and measurements can vary across study, reflecting again the multidimensionality of group identity and consciousness (Huddy 2003).

What causes group consciousness? Scholarship on race has attributed high group consciousness among African Americans to a number of factors, including a shared tradition of racial discrimination and socioeconomic disadvantage (e.g., Voss 1996). Another factor is the perception of threat (e.g., Grant and Brown 1995). Research has shown the perception of threat to increase awareness of group distinctions and the salience of group-based interests in political matters for groups other than race. For example, in their study of the effects of threat on anti-terrorism policy attitudes, Huddy et al. (2005) find that the perception of threat leads to a heightened identification with one's nationality as well as an increased bias against others (also Giles and Evans 1985; Brown 1995; Huddy 2003). Given the history and characteristics of American religion, threat holds potential as a politicizing agent for religious group identity (Smith 1998; Marsden 2006; Campbell 2006).

I am aware of scant few political studies on threat and religion. Campbell (2006) concludes that evangelical Christians respond to religious threat by voting in higher numbers for conservative candidates. Specifically, evangelicals who live in areas with a higher proportion of secularists tended to vote in higher numbers for George W. Bush during the 2000 presidential election. To operationalize threat, the author looks to a particular stream within the race literature where white Americans were found to be more likely to vote for racially conservative candidates as the proportion of African Americans in their community increases (Matthews and Prothro 1966; Blalock 1967; Wright 1977; Giles and Buckner 1993; Giles and Hertz 1994; Glaser 1994; 2003). Campbell (2006) does provide tentative support for a threat effect but does not address this dissertation's associated question of whether this is due to a politicization of religious group identity.

Theoretical support for a politicized evangelical group identity exists (Smith 1998) but remains to be empirically tested.

Smith's (1998) influential work on American evangelicalism describes it as a subculture in constant tension with broader society. Its missionary ideals push evangelicals beyond the symbolic boundaries of their sub-cultural home to engage a secular world that often threatens the major tenets of their moral worldview. Smith concludes that "the evangelical movement's vitality is not a product of its protected isolation from but its vigorous engagement with pluralistic modernity" (98). By this account, threat is very much a part of the American evangelical experience. But several questions remain. In particular, how does threat relate to evangelical religious group identity? Is it a politicizing agent? If so, does this hold for other religious groups? Finally, how does this affect the political attitudes of group members?

Like Smith and Campbell, I believe that evangelical Christianity constitutes a social group identity, but more research is needed to ascertain whether this identity really does exist, whether it becomes politicized by threat, and the consequences of this process. This also showcases a weakness in our current understanding of religion and politics in the U.S. Namely, much of this research focuses on evangelical Protestants. Consequently, many of the current theories of religion and politics develop out of or in contrast to the evangelical milieu. As arguably the most researched group within American religion, evangelicalism features prominently in political research on religion. However, it is also important to identify more generalizable processes concerning religious identity, threat, and political attitudes and behavior.

In this dissertation, I suggest that group identity is not specific to evangelical Protestantism or other religious groups with clearly delineated boundaries, e.g., fundamentalists. Group identity is an identification of the self with a social group with which one shares certain attributes, feelings, resources, status, and so forth. Moreover, the degree of attachment that one feels to a group is not necessarily fixed. In terms of its political relevance, group identity may fluctuate in two ways.

First, a group identity may be salient for some issues more than others. For example, a police officer's group identity as such could be more salient when considering crime and law enforcement policy than, say, environmental policy. Variation in a group identity's political relevance may occur across policy domain.

Second, political circumstances may cause a certain group identity to become more salient to an individual. For example, a public school teacher may have a weak sense a group identity with other teachers. However, when the state legislature proposes reducing public school teacher benefits, or reducing school funding in order to balance the state budget, the teacher's sense of group identity could increase in response to such a perceived threat. Conceivably, the increase in salience for this group identity could affect the teacher's political reasoning on matters of taxes and spending priorities. The same could be said for political behaviors like voting. Candidate characteristics and stances may be weighted differently within one's mental calculus depending on the salience of a particular group identity at the time.

From this perspective, religious group identity can exist in varying degrees of strength for both individuals and groups. Groups like evangelicals may have a particularly strong group identity. Other groups may demonstrate weaker group identity,

but this does not mean that one does not exist or that it would not emerge within certain policy domains or in response to certain stimuli in the political environment.

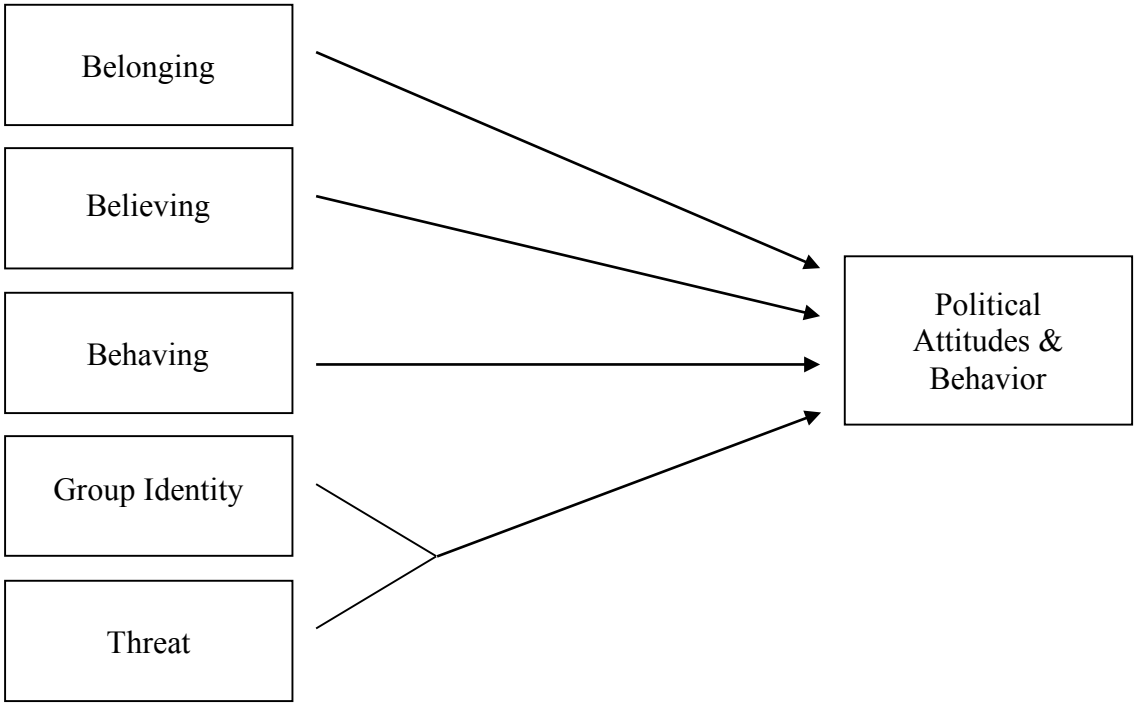
This is where the perception of threat relates to group identity. Threat is the sense of fear elicited when an individual perceives that their interests or wellbeing are under attack. In politics, this involves groups. When a policy is thought to unfairly punish one group over others, the disadvantaged group could perceive that policy as a threat. Research on other social identities suggests that the perception of threat can politicize a group identity, making it more salient and politically relevant as a determinant of political attitudes (e.g., Dawson 1994). This project aims to understand whether this process exists for religion.

In this view, threat is theorized as having a moderating effect on religious group identity. The literature has well established three politically relevant dimensions of religion, often referred to as the "three Bs" (Layman 2001; Green 2007; Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Guth 2007). These include religious "belonging" (i.e., one's religious affiliation), religious "believing," and religious "behaving" (i.e., an individual's religious practices). When religious identity and threat are placed alongside these three Bs, the conceptualization of religion's political effect could be specified in a model as:

$$Y = \beta_1 Z + \beta_2(\text{belonging}) + \beta_3(\text{believing}) + \beta_4(\text{behaving}) + \beta_5(\text{group identity}) + \beta_6(\text{threat}) + \beta_7(\text{group identity*threat}) + u$$

where Z represents other relevant variables and controls, and the interaction term accounts for the moderating effect of threat on group identity. (See also Figure 1.1.)

Figure 1.1 Conceptualizing the Political Effect of Religion



Several studies of group identity within the race literature have shown that the relationship between group identity and stimuli in the political environment like threat can have a profound effect on political behavior. Dawson's (1994) "black utility heuristic," which demonstrates the powerful link of an individual's perceived life chances to those of their racial group, shows that a politically relevant group identity can fundamentally alter the structure of political behavior for a set of individuals. If a similar process exists for religion, our current understanding of how religion structures political behavior, built upon the predictive ability of religious belonging, religious belief, and religious behavior, is unable to tap the social psychological connection between individuals and their religious group, let alone the influence of stimuli in the political

environment on such an identity. This dissertation aims to provide the requisite measures to begin such a scholarly conversation.

It also provides a more dynamic conceptualization of religion's political relevance that is more able to react to changing circumstances in the political environment. While not necessarily static, traditional measures of belonging, beliefs, and behaviors are often treated in political research as control variables. Whereas, religious identity taps into the psychological attachment one has to a religious group, the salience of which may rise and fall across time and policy domain.

Chapter Overviews

The empirical core of the dissertation takes shape in three central chapters. Chapter 2 examines several different approaches to measuring social identity, and develops and tests different measurements for religious group identity. Chapter 3 presents two studies, one experimental and one that analyzes cross-sectional survey data, to establish the relationship between threat and religious group identity, looking especially at religion's effects on policy attitudes toward prayer at public school events. Chapter 4 looks at similar research questions through survey data on attitudes toward religious subject matter in the Texas public school curriculum. Together, these chapters enable an exploration of my orienting hypotheses that group identity is a politically relevant dimension of the way in which religion structures political attitudes and engagement, and that the perception of threat toward one's religious group will lead to more extreme policy preferences.

Chapter 2 draws on a survey of 1024 undergraduate students at the University of Texas at Austin, with several questions that allow an assessment of religious group identity and the way in which it functions as part of an individual's religiosity. Measures of social identity are especially present in political research on race and national identity. However, social identity does not play a meaningful role in our current understanding of religion and politics. Consequently, no known survey measures of religion as a social identity exist. This underscores the importance of this chapter to develop necessary tools for this line of research.

This chapter translates six approaches to measuring group identity in race and national identity scholarship to religion. Because group identity is often considered a multidimensional construct, many of these measures involve multiple questions in order to account for different facets of group identity. In total, these six measures could be considered as taking four distinct approaches to measuring group identity. One approach assesses group identity in terms of the relationship between one's own group and other groups along four or more separate dimensions (Miller et al. 1981; Chong and Rogers 2005; Harris-Lacewell and Junn 2007). A related approach collapses this into a single question (Dawson 1994). Another approach departs from a focus on dimensionality and instead measures the difference in perceived closeness to one's own group versus other groups (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999). A final approach, rather than focusing on the relationship between one's own group and others groups, instead measures group identity in terms of the relationship between an individual and their own group (Huddy and Khatib 2007).

These four distinct approaches also represent differences in the way in which scholars have conceptualized social identity and its political implications. Since all four have proven useful in the development of group identity research in other areas, they each warrant inclusion. This chapter assesses each of these different approaches when measuring religious group identity. It compares and contrasts these approaches through statistical tests. It also demonstrates their relationship to other standard measures of religion—religious belonging, belief, and behavior—and looks at their predictive power. In sum, Chapter 2 offers different ways in which religious group identity can be measured, which provides an important tool for advancing this line of research.

Chapter 3 establishes the relationship between religious group identity and threat through an original experiment and survey data on attitudes toward prayer at public school events. The experiment was embedded within a telephone survey of registered voters in Tarrant County (Fort Worth), Texas. Respondents were broken into treatment and control groups. The treatment group received a statement that could be perceived as a threat to their religious group's relative social status, while the control group did not. Due to population constraints, only Christians were included in the experiment, since no other religious group could yield a sufficient number of respondents. The threat treatment used in this experiment presents demographic trends about Christianity in the United States; namely, one-quarter of Americans no longer self-identify as a Christian, and this proportion increases to one-third among Americans under the age of 30. Both groups then received the same two policy questions about whether public school graduation ceremonies should include a student-led prayer. One question specified a prayer by a Christian student and the other by a Muslim student.

In general, the experiment confirms expectations. The treatment group demonstrated more supportive policy attitudes toward prayer at public school graduations. However, an interesting wrinkle is that this higher level of support holds for both Christian and Muslim-led prayers, which suggests that threat does not necessarily manifest in policy preferences for Christian privilege but may evidence a more ecumenical respect for religion in public life. A religious identity question also allows this to be examined separately for those with strong and weak religious identities, and the trend of higher support among the treatment group is demonstrated albeit differently for both strong and weak identifiers. While the differences between treatment and control groups do not reach a conventional level of statistical significance, as might be expected with a small sample size, they are nonetheless suggestive. They are also buttressed with statistically significant results from survey data, which find religious identity and threat to have statistically significant, independent and positive effects on policy attitudes toward public prayer. Moreover, a statistically significant interaction exists between religious identity and threat, which reveals the moderating effect of threat on religious identity to be greater for those with weaker religious identities than for those with stronger ones.

Chapter 4 explores similar research questions with survey data on policy attitudes toward religious content in Texas public schools from a May 2010 statewide survey of Texans conducted for the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin. These policies include the establishment of high school Bible classes and revising the state's social studies curriculum to emphasize the Christian religious beliefs of America's Founders. These are actual policy changes enacted around the time of the

survey. Because they involve real world situations of religion in public policy, these data provide a favorable opportunity to explore the relationship between religious identity, threat, and policy attitudes. The survey includes relevant religious demographic questions, and questions on the salience of one's religion and hostility toward religion, which can be used to assess religious identity and threat.

This chapter presents three key findings that support the dissertation's overall research aims. First, it gives further support to a relationship between threat and religious identity. Similar to findings in Chapter 3, these data again show threat and religious identity to have independent positive effects on policy opinions, with both leading to greater support for religion in public schools. A statistically significant interaction once again shows the moderating effect of threat on religious identity to hold greater impact for those with weaker religious identities than for those with stronger ones.

Second, it also shows this moderating effect to have inverse effects for strong Democrats compared with strong Republicans and the overall model. Among strong Republicans, the effect of threat and religious identity resembles the overall model, with threat having a greater positive among those with weaker rather than stronger religious identities, but this is not the case among their Democratic counterparts. Rather, threat is nearly imperceptible among strong Democrats with a weak religious identity. But, threat amplifies the effect of religious identity among strong Democrats who also have a strong religious identity, greatly increasing their support for religion in public schools. This is also noteworthy because it runs counter to the negative effect of a Democratic party identification.

Finally, this chapter finds the nonreligious and religiously unaffiliated to perceive threat in the form of too much religion in public schools. For these respondents, the perception of threat toward the nonreligious has a statistically significant impact on policy attitudes, leading to a much lower level of support for these curriculum changers.

A fifth and final chapter summarizes the results of all three empirical chapters and crystalizes their insights, evaluates the relevance of this research to some normative questions of public importance, and suggests avenues for future research.

Chapter 2: Conceptualizing and Measuring Religion as a Social Identity

Overview

This chapter overviews the ways in which religion is most often conceptualized and operationalized in political science research and presents another possible approach that draws on social identity theory. It looks first at the "three Bs" of religious belonging, believing, and behaving, which are commonplace in quantitative research on religion and politics. I then suggest that social identity theory offers an additional way in which to conceptualize religion, which presents the possibility of another politically relevant dimension of religion alongside those already established by the three Bs.

Social identity theory posits that individuals can derive, to a certain extent, a sense of personal identity from a group to which they belong. If the salience of that group identity is particularly high, the heightened awareness, or "consciousness," of that identity can impact an individual's political reasoning. This general relationship has been demonstrated in social science scholarship on race and national identity. A close identification with a social group can thus provide an explanatory mechanism for linkages between that social identity and politics.

By explicating a theory of religion as a social identity analogous to those found in research on race and national identity, this chapter explores the possibility that a salient group identity might similarly exist for religion. It also presents some of the more common survey measures of group identity for race and national identity and translates

them to religion. These measures are tested using a survey of undergraduate students at the University of Texas at Austin. They are analyzed for theoretical appropriateness, internal consistency, their relationship to other common measures of religion, and performance in models of political attitudes.

Conceptualizing Religion

Over the past few decades, religion has commanded a greater presence in scholarship on American politics.[1] For empirical and especially quantitative research, this involves determinations about how to first conceptualize and then operationalize religion. Accordingly, this has forced political science to grapple with questions that arguably stand outside its proverbial wheelhouse. The nature and essence of religion is an age-old question and one perhaps better suited to theologians and philosophers than political scientists. Nonetheless, establishing definitions is essential for any serious study. This dissertation is chiefly concerned with how religion functions within political reasoning, making the operative understanding of religion of fundamental importance. In light of that, it seems reasonable to begin the conversation by taking stock of how social science conceptualizes religion.

Social scientists have developed several constellations of understandings of religion to guide its inquiries. Some have chosen to center their understanding of religion

[1] See, for example, the relatively new scholarly journal *Politics and Religion*, sponsored by the subfield's organized section of the American Association of Political Science, with an inaugural volume in 2008. See also the 2009 *Oxford Handbook on Religion and American Politics*, which fills nearly 600 pages with political science's most significant findings and avenues of inquiry on the subject.

on how it functions; that is, what religion *does*. Sociologist Milton Yinger (1970, 7) is illustrative, "Religion, then, can be defined as a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with [the] ultimate problems (the problems of origins, the purpose and meaning of life, what is right and wrong, etc.) of human life." So too is Thomas Luckmann (1967), who conceptualizes religion as "the capacity of the human organism to transcend its biological nature through the construction of objective, morally binding, all-embracing universes of meaning" (Berger 1967, 177).[2] Robert Bellah's (1970, 21) approach also demonstrates this emphasis on how religion functions, writing that religion is "a set of symbolic forms and acts that relate [people] to the ultimate conditions of [their] existence." These perspectives represent a sampling of a social scientific conceptualizations of religion that center primarily on how religion functions in the lives of individuals and groups.

Another constellation focuses less on how religion functions and more on its substance, or what religion *is* rather than what religion *does*. One of the earliest social scientists of religion, Emile Durkheim ([1912] 1995, 62) writes, "[a] religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." Here, emphasis is placed on distilling religion to its core essence. Modern sociologists Rodney Stark and Roger Finke follow suit, writing

[2] See also Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.* New York: Random House.

that "[r]eligion consists of very general explanations of existence, including the terms of exchange with god or gods" (Stark and Finke 2000, 91).

Some conceptualizations bridge both of these to an extent. Thomas Tweed, for example, provides a substantive conceptualization that derives from "lived religion," where its essence is understood in the context of its function within a specific community and in contact with others. "Religions are confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and superhuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries," he writes (Tweed 2008, 54). Recognizing the increasing imprint of diversity on daily life in modern society and the rise of religious churn, Tweed opts to conceptualize religion with spatial metaphors like "dwelling" and "crossing" to avoid "essentializing religious traditions as static, isolated, and immutable substances" (60). Geertz (1966, 23) also splits the difference between functional and substantive lenses with a thoroughly symbolic conceptualization of religion as:

> a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in [people] by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.[3]

For such a multifaceted concept as religion, this variety of conceptualizations is understandable. Political scientists have drawn on and employed many of these and more. For the most part, political science has sidestepped definitions of religion; a forgivable

[3] This discussion of conceptualizations of religion is guided in part by graduate studies with Professors David Yamane and Thomas Tweed.

sin considering that it seldom delves into religion as such, so much as studying (or at least observing) religion's impact on and within the context of particular political phenomena. Most studies of American politics that discuss religion are primarily concerned with how it contributes to the structure of political attitudes or affects political behavior or vote choice. That is, religion is not typically a dependent variable of interest, so much as one constituent element within the broad social and political landscape that helps to explain our political selves.

The rise of survey research and abundance of survey data has also shaped political research's approach to religion. As of 2017, the Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA) contains nearly 1,000 datasets with religious variables for use by researchers. Some of these datasets, like the American National Election Survey, General Social Survey, and Pew Research Center studies are replete with measures of particular interest to political researchers, such as political behaviors, candidate and party preferences, attitudes on matters of social and political importance, and a host of relevant demographic variables. As a result, they are among the most common data sources in quantitative political research. While religious variables are present, they often exist in fairly standard clusters that are commonly found on large political surveys and may not be as robust as desired for religious research. These include measures of religious behavior, religious belief, and religious affiliation (or "belonging" for the sake of alliteration). These three Bs—behavior, belief, and belonging—comprise three distinct dimensions of religion that are now fairly well established as politically relevant

(Kellstedt et al. 1996; Layman 1997; 2001; Green 2007; Olson and Warber 2008; Smidt et al. 2009).

The sheer ubiquity of the three Bs, relative to other measures, may also contribute to the direction of scholarship and the manner in which religion is conceptualized in mainstream political research. On one hand, this is understandable. Over time, a sizeable body of research developed, which demonstrates the political relevance of these three dimensions of religion. Layman's (2001) discussion is instructive. Political science has long noticed the political relevance of religious affiliation (e.g. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954). Other scholars observed that within these affiliations, some adherents cling to a moral traditionalism while others embrace more progressive outlooks (Wuthnow 1988; Hunter 1991, 1994). Still other research suggests the predictive value of varying levels of devoutness (Wald, Kellstedt, and Leege 1993; Layman 1997). As a result, an ample body of work suggests that religious belonging, believing, and behaving are all necessary for a full and accurate account of how religion contributes to the structure of political attitudes and affects political behaviors.

On the other hand, scholarly consensus like this is a double-edged sword. It confirms the shared wisdom of accumulated findings. Yet the widespread availability of these measures, and their general acceptance as tapping three different facets of religion's political relevance, may also serve the dampen continued curiosity in how political research should conceptualize religion. While appreciating the value of the three Bs, the primary goal of this chapter is to challenge the tendency toward stasis by offering another

way to conceptualize religion; namely, viewing religion as a social identity with the potential for political relevance, and developing survey measures requisite for its study.

The "Three Bs"

Historically, religious affiliation (or "belonging") proved one of the surest ways to parse religious differences. Herberg's (1954) seminal work *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* illustrates this well. In his observation of mid-century America, Herberg views religion to be society's single largest distinguishing cultural feature. "By and large, to be an American today means to be either a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew," writes Herberg (40). Also, "America today may be conceived, as it is indeed conceived by most Americans, as one great community divided into three big sub-communities religiously defined" (38). Herberg considers these three brand name religious affiliations as distinct but also sharing many common features. Most notably, they each cohere and reinforce a more general American culture and stoke a sense of patriotism and national pride. Not to identify oneself as either a Protestant, Catholic, or Jew, is "somehow not to be an American," opines Herberg (257).

Herberg adapts the idea of America as a "melting pot" of immigrants, where distinctive features of one's cultural background dissipate into a more homogeneous American culture, seeing instead three religiously defined melting pots. While many distinctive cultural features dissipated over time, such as national origin, these three major religious categories demonstrated much greater cohesion. Protestants might change their denominational affiliation with seemingly little resistance but seldom ventured

across the Tiber. Interdenominational activities were not uncommon, but participation remained generally within the Protestant orbit. Roman Catholics developed a host of distinctive social organizations, from schools to civic and recreational clubs, to reinforce their religious identity. Jews, Herberg opined, seemed to think of themselves more in religious than in ethnic terms.

It could be argued that Herberg was, at times, long on opinion and short on evidence. But, for whatever else one may say about his study, his observation of the political relevance of religion was well established. In the early days of the American republic, religious innovators tended to line up in the Jeffersonian camp, which makes sense given that Jefferson championed religious liberty and sought protection from state privilege of religion or the tyranny of the majority.[4] Establishment religions privileged by the state or the "standing order" as they were later called—Episcopal, Presbyterian, and many Congregational churches—tended toward a more formal view of a church's place in society and government. By the 1830s, with higher rates of immigration from

[4] See Jefferson's letter the Baptists of Danbury, Connecticut, stating, "the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State." (Dated January 1, 1802, and available online at the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov.) See also Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, declaring that "no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities." (Passed by the Virginia General Assembly on January 16, 1786, and available online at the Virginia Historical Society, www.vahistorical.org.)

Catholic-heavy countries, a Protestant-Catholic political divide emerged, with Catholics supporting Democrats in higher numbers and Republicans drawing the lion's share of support from Protestants (especially in the northeast). Religious affiliation was also a feature of Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal Coalition," which included Catholics, Jews, and lower class Protestants (Noll 2002; Lambert 2008; Fowler et al. 2010; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014).

When Herberg wrote in the early 1950s, the American religious and cultural landscape he depicted was on the verge of seismic shifts that would render his work's major contribution more of a historical documentation of its place in time than a cultural analysis with enduring relevance. During the mid-20th century, the fissure between conservative and liberal Protestantism deepened, denominationalism declined in significance, and evangelicalism emerged as a significant subset of Protestantism that defied traditional denominational barriers. Protestant and Catholic divisions declined as religious churn increased as did intermarriage, and contentious social issues fostered deeper ecumenical relations along political lines (Putnam and Campbell 2010; Hunter 1991). Indeed, religious affiliation became a matter of greater complexity.

This complexity provides a difficult task for survey researchers, who must find reliable ways to create meaningful data on religious affiliation. Were the paradigm of Herberg's day still extant, ascertaining religious affiliation in survey research would be a fairly straightforward matter of distinguishing between broad categories of Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and perhaps a small handful of others. This approach represents a fairly rudimentary way to categorize religious affiliation according to tradition; that is,

grouping affiliations that share similar distinguishing characteristics in the way of theology and practice.

While Herberg's categories are too rudimentary for today's religious landscape, categorizing religious affiliation by tradition is one way in which survey researchers approach the matter. Kellstedt and Green (1993), Layman (2001), and others highlight six traditions common in political science literature: evangelical Protestantism, mainline Protestantism, black Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, and the nonreligious or secular.[5]

Within Protestantism, the line between mainline and evangelicals is imprecise. Mainline Protestantism comprises historic denominations, the most notable of which are the Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Congregational Church (United Church of Christ), and the United Methodist Church. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, America's historic Protestant

[5] The Pew Forum and many scholars adopt these six categories for religious tradition. These Protestant categories—evangelical, mainline, and the African American (or Black Church) tradition—present fairly distinct structures and/or emphases on religious belief and practice. Some outliers such as Mormons and other minority groups do not easily conform to this categorization, though. Some also see Hispanic Protestants as a distinct tradition. For example, Fowler et al. (2010) present this breakdown of the American electorate by religious tradition: white evangelical Protestant 23%, white mainline Protestant 14%, African American Protestant 9%, Hispanic Protestant 7%, Catholic 25%, Mormon/other white Christian 3%, Muslim/Hindu/Buddhist 3%, unaffiliated 15%. Arguably, Hispanic Protestants do not share the same alignment of race and religion as does the Black Church tradition, and Hispanic Protestantism is not similarly regarded in the mainstream literature as a distinct religious tradition. While Spanish speaking Protestant congregations may be almost exclusively Hispanic, many Hispanics attend a racially mixed congregation. In contrast, most African American Protestants attend historically black churches. Research has shown more clearly evident differences between Latino and Anglo Catholics (e.g., Putnam and Campbell 2010; Leal and Patterson 2013).

denominations were rocked by controversies, most notably the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, in which new developments in science and learning had to be squared with traditional religious understandings of the Bible and Christian teaching. Several denominations split along these lines, with those against the new science and learning leaving to organize new denominations more in line with their beliefs. Today's mainline Protestant denominations remained in continuity with their historic ecclesial structures and tend to emphasize the complementarity of religious faith with contemporary society rather than viewing them in conflict with one another (Longfield 1991; Marsden 2006).

In contrast, evangelicalism represents a sometimes distinct and sometimes crosscutting stream relative to Protestant denominations. Grant Wacker (1985, 17) characterizes evangelicals as sharing a belief that "the sole authority in religion is the Bible and the sole means of salvation is a life-transforming experience wrought by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ." Unlike their mainstream counterparts, evangelicals view modern society and Christian teachings more in conflict than concord. The hermeneutic for such an understanding centers on what adherents would term a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ" and an experience of being spiritually "born again." In line with their more dualistic view of religion and society, evangelicals tend toward a literal (or at least theologically conservative) interpretation of the Bible and adherence to moral and theological traditionalism.

Today's evangelical Protestants stand in continuity with the early 20th century fundamentalists, those who severed ties with historic denominational structures they deemed as too accepting of modern influences. The term "fundamentalists" derives from

their efforts to elevate the "fundamentals" of the Christian faith over and against modernist opposition, e.g., as demonstrated by the theological book series *The Fundamentals*. Five major touchstones, include the veracity and infallibility of the Bible, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the atoning power of his death, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and the historicity of his miracles as recorded in Scripture (Noll 1994; Marsden 2006).[6] While these fundamentalists grew quiescent from public engagement in the mid-1900s, after the Scopes trial they began to re-emerge into the public square as early as the late 1940s and in force by the mid-to-late 1970s. During this process of re-engagement with broader society, the group came to embrace the more outwardly-focused terms of self-identification like "new evangelical" or neo-evangelical, harkening back to the theological stream associated with the Great Awakenings, or simply "evangelical" (for example, Henry [1947] 2003; see also Noll 1994; Marsden 2006). In 1942, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) was founded, which now has 52 member denominations, in order to bring some organizational unity to this theological movement. In line with its separatist roots, the NAE was originally viewed as an alternative to the mainstream National Council of Churches and has also spearheaded Bible translations more amendable to evangelical theological perspectives (Patterson 2010).

[6] *The Fundamentals* were published from 1910-1915 as a 12-volume series, underwritten by oil magnates Lyman and Milton Stewart. Led by chief editor/authors A.C. Dixon, Louis Meyer, and Reuben Torrey, the series championed theological conservatism and three million sets were distributed free of charge to pastors, theology professors and students, college professors, Sunday School personnel, and YMCAs. Essays in the series came from several well-known pastors and conservative theologians, including such names as Benjamin Warfield, E.Y. Mullins, W.H. Griffith Thomas, Thomas Spurgeon, C.I. Schofield, and Charles Erdman (Marsden 2006).

Complicating matters, while evangelical Protestant is a commonly cited theological tradition—indeed a sizeable one that comprises a quarter of the U.S. population—evangelicalism is a trans-denominational identity that is sometimes embraced by entire denominations and sometimes a stream within a denomination. The distinction is important and accurate measurement matters, though, with a 25% of Americans identifying as evangelical Protestants and another 15% as Protestants in the mainline tradition (Pew Forum 2008). Moreover, we see political differences between evangelicals and mainliners, reiterating the importance of precise and reliable data.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life runs the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, one of the most exhaustive, regularly-occurring surveys of American religion. The most recent survey contacted 35,000 respondents and included a robust array of questions. With ample resources and a special interest in precise measurements of religion, the survey employs a complex system of branching questions in order to type respondents according to religious tradition. Pew considers 63 denominations (including a few categorical affiliations) to constitute mainline Protestantism. It categorizes another 165 denominations as evangelical Protestants.

In order to arrive at any of these, branching and follow-up questions narrow a respondent's affiliation down from broad categories like Baptist or Presbyterian to specific affiliations like the Full Gospel Baptist Association or Associate Reformed Presbyterian. However, even after drilling down to this level of specificity, categorizing religious affiliation by tradition is yet more complicated. While some of these denominational affiliations are considered exclusively mainline or exclusively

evangelical, others contain both groups under the same denominational umbrella. In these cases, the survey asks: “Do you consider yourself to be an evangelical or ‘born again’ Christian?” Those who answer in the affirmative may be typed as evangelical and those who do not may be typed as mainline.

When typing religious affiliation by tradition, African American Protestants are typically categorized separately from evangelicals and mainliners, even though many consider themselves to be evangelical or born again Christians. This is because African American Protestant churches (the Black Church tradition) embody traditions and beliefs unique to the African American experience. Moreover, a history of slavery and segregation led to these churches developing separately from their white counterparts. As a result, the Black Church has theological emphases on hope, freedom, liberation, and justice that are not shared in the same way by non-black Protestant counterparts. Historically, the Black Church has also provided invaluable opportunities to develop civic skills, especially among a population that tended to fall on the low side of the socioeconomic status spectrum. During the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Church was a critical center of organizing and leadership development. Since African Americans are one of the most cohesive voting blocks for the Democratic Party, these churches also demonstrate political tendencies that differ significantly from other Protestants, which also lends toward categorizing them separately.

While this system of categorization may work for a large national survey of religion and politics with considerable resources and a substantial budget, branching questions and follow-ups may prove difficult for smaller surveys with modest budgets.

These cases require balance between precision and parsimony, which can pose interesting challenges. For example, some non-denominational and "new paradigm" churches do not consider themselves Protestant (even though they are in the Protestant historical tradition).[7] Still other respondents who may attend a Protestant church do not realize this fact. They may instead think of themselves as simply "Baptist" or "Lutheran" or "Christian." In order to account for this, surveys may include catch-all categories like "Christian" to capture Protestant respondents who don't realize they're actually Protestant. The University of Texas at Austin/Texas Tribune Poll provides a good example. It includes enough religious variables for useful research but not nearly as exhaustive a set of questions as the aforementioned Pew survey. The Texas survey presents a smaller list of 32 religious affiliations, including some broad catch-all categories, through which respondents can be categorized into a smaller number of tradition groups.[8]

[7] Atwood (2010, 241) observes that "one of the most important trends in American Christianity since 1980 has been the rapid increase in the number and size of congregations with few or no ties to traditional denominations." He terms these "new paradigm" churches. In some cases, they have a loose denominational affiliation but many do not and grow into "mega-churches" with their own distinctive features. Some advertise as churches "for people who do not like church," making it difficult to place in a traditional denominational framework. The new paradigm churches are not alone in presenting such a difficulty. So-called "emerging" churches similarly eschew denominational identities, as do more traditional and self-styles "non-denominational" churches.

[8] Unlike the Pew survey, which relies on telephone interviews, the Texas poll utilizes an online platform, which eliminates the need for a complex set of branch and follow-up questions to drill down to a specific denomination. Nonetheless, respondents would not fair well with an exhaustive list of 200+ denominational affiliations, so 32 of the most common affiliations (including broad catch-all categories) are included.

Categorizing according to religious tradition is the most common but not the only way to approach religious affiliation. *The Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (Atwood 2010), now in its 13th edition, demonstrates an alternative approach of grouping by denominational family. Whereas a religious tradition grouping would place Southern Baptists among evangelicals and American Baptists among mainliners, a family categorization would consider these instead under the same Baptist umbrella since they share the same lineage. As another example, Pew categorizes the Presbyterian Church (USA) as mainline and the Presbyterian Church in America as evangelical, whereas a family categorization would simply consider them Presbyterian. Imprecise question wording may also collapse these together, e.g., offering only "Baptist" or "Presbyterian" as survey response options. This approach works well for historical and theological inquiries, which may benefit by tracing continuity and change within a denomination's family line, but it presents problems for scientific studies of contemporary religion and politics. As Layman (2001, 54) explains:

> cultural conflict is not between members of different denominational families, but between individuals with fundamentally different religious beliefs and worldviews. Thus, the important political differences are not between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, but between the members of those groups who have conservative, or traditional, religious beliefs and their counterparts who have liberal, or modern beliefs and moral outlooks.

This observation draws on significant insights by Wuthnow, Hunter, and other scholars who have highlighted the growing role of religious beliefs in predicting political

attitudes and behaviors. Wuthnow (1988) calls this phenomenon a "restructuring" of American religion. His main argument posits that significant polarization between liberals and conservatives within American denominations has emerged since Herberg's observations several decades earlier. Accompanying this divide, Wuthnow observes a general decline in the significance of denominational structures and labels, a rise in "special purpose groups" to service liberal and conservative factions, and a self-sorting of adherents into these groups. Wuthnow concludes that religious affiliation, while not unimportant, is comparatively less important than where a person stands on the continuum of religious conservatism to liberalism.

In a 2007 presentation at Brown University, James Davison Hunter recalled how a newspaper article on a religious anti-abortion protest crystalized a similar theory in his mind.[9] He was struck that Orthodox rabbis, Catholic priests and nuns, and some fundamentalist Protestant ministers worked (and were arrested) together in common political cause. He was particularly struck by the partnership among religious groups that historically associated little with one another save only perhaps in acrimony, recalling the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism in American history. As one of my favorite lines in the children's movie *The Land Before Time* puts it, "three horns never

[9] Hunter, James Davison. 2007. "The Great Divide: Is America in the Midst of a Culture War?" Lecture presented at Brown University. As of the time of this dissertation's submission, a video of the lecture (with counterarguments by Morris Fiorina and audience questions) is archived online at: https://www.c-span.org/video/?202596-1/ideological-culture-wars-america. Hunter has published similar sentiments in Hunter, James Davison and Alan Wolfe. 2006. *Is There a Culture War?: A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

play with longnecks." But indeed, they apparently now were. For Hunter, this meant something significant. He explains:

> It meant that one of the big divisions…the division that came with the birth of Christ between Christians and Jews—and the division that occurred 16 centuries later with the Protestant Reformation—these divisions were no longer as politically significant as another division, a division that seemed to be rooted in the secular enlightenment, and especially the French enlightenment.

We see in Hunter's example (and he provides many others in his 1991 and 1994 books) that religious belief stands alongside religious affiliation as another necessary dimension when viewing the political consequence of religion. Where an individual locates along an ideological (and theological) spectrum is highly relevant. Does a person embrace a more liberal worldview or a more traditional one? In survey research, a common measurement approach involves how an individual views the origin and authority of their tradition's scriptures. The Pew Forum asks: "Which comes closest to your view? The Bible is the World of God, or the Bible is a book written by men and is not the word of God?" (For non-Christian faiths, "the Bible" is substituted with the Torah, Quran, or simply "holy scriptures.") A follow-up question brings added clarity: "And would you say that the Bible is to be taken literally, word for word, or not everything in the Bible should be taken literally, word for word?"

While this is the most common survey question used for this purpose, Leal and Patterson (2013, 7) note that the divine origin and literal interpretation of scripture is not an especially appropriate measure of religious traditionalism for Roman Catholics:

Religious beliefs like Biblical literalism are important because they reflect the role of an interpretive community in articulating a religious worldview that translates religious teachings and texts into a particular vision for social and political life (Fish 1980; McDaniel and Ellison 2008). However, for Catholics and therefore most Latinos, literalism is not a traditional component of religious beliefs. In American religion, Biblical literalism emerged as a serious religious controversy during the fundamentalist controversies of mainline Protestant denominations, and it was especially prominent in the Southern Baptist interdenominational conflicts of the 1980s and 1990s (Leonard 1990; Longfield 1991; Marsden 2006).

While most Protestant traditions consider the Bible to be an unparalleled source of authority on religious matters, Catholics couple the Bible (which is not read literally) with an historic interpretation through church traditions and teaching (known as the Magisterium). Put simply, literalism is a rather Protestant concept. Still, literalism is a common way to demarcate traditionalism among Christians in religious research, Catholics included. We contend that it is insufficient as a standalone measure and less appropriate to the Catholic context than the Protestant.

Political surveys that contain multiple religious questions may include other questions about religious beliefs, which could better apply to different religious groups. The Pew Forum's religious landscape survey includes questions about belief in God, spiritual wellbeing, sense of wonder, guidance of and standards on right and wrong, and

belief in heaven and hell. The General Social Survey has included questions about belief in God, the Devil, heaven, hell, life after death, miracles, Nirvana, reincarnation, and deceased ancestors. In addition to views toward scripture, it has also included specifically Catholic-relevant questions concerning attitudes toward the Pope, fidelity to church teachings, and ecumenism. Such a variety of questions can enable a more robust assessment of traditionalism through a scale that includes several measures of belief, such as positions on certain religious tenets. This may still prove problematic for some faith traditions, and especially those unaffiliated with an organized religion, such as the growing number of Americans who claim to be spiritual but not religious.[10] Hunter (1991) offers an example of a more interfaith way to assess traditionalism, by asking whether a respondent agrees or disagrees that there are "absolute standards of right and wrong" anchored in transcendent rather than human authority.

Alongside belief, religion typically places some degree of importance on certain actions or practices. These may occur in the corporate sense of joint liturgical practices of ritual observance and worship, or in the personal sense of lived devotion such as prayer or studying religious texts. The substance of these actions can vary widely among religions. Corporate worship provides a good example. Catholics and Orthodox participate in highly symbolic and ritualized worship and regularly partake of the Eucharist, whereas Protestants tend to hold more didactic services with vastly divergent

[10] According to the Pew Research Center, "The growth of the unaffiliated population and their decreasing religiosity have been the main factors behind the emergence of a less religious public overall. But, interestingly, the rise in spirituality has been happening among both highly religious people and the religiously unaffiliated" (Masci and Lipka 2016).

Eucharistic practices. At the personal level, all Abrahamic faiths involve prayer, but some emphasize prayer at regular intervals throughout the day while others do not. Layman (2001) points out that religious behavior is often considered as a conditional variable, which suggests the degree to which affiliation or belief affect and individual's political reasoning or behaviors. The reasoning for this is fairly straightforward. Individuals who regularly attend worship services or frequently practice devotional aspects of their religion are more likely to connect their religious sensibilities to decisions and actions in their daily life. McDaniel and Ellison (2008) also note that churches can act as interpretive communities that frame the understandings of churchgoers. Their influence in this regard would understandably be strongest among those who most often attend services, interact with their fellow religionists, and expose themselves to the church's teachings.

Research has also linked behavior patterns of particular traditions with civic engagement. For example, Verba et al. (1995) suggest that a relatively low level of civic engagement among Latinos is explained by their predominant Roman Catholicism. A more hierarchical Catholic Church structure is argued to provide less opportunity for lay leadership and therefore comparatively less opportunity to develop civic skills. However, Jones-Correa and Leal (2001) provide alternative evidence that contradicts the Verba et al. finding; rather than denomination, the key variable is attendance at religious services, which is associated with Latino as well as Anglo political participation. Particularly for Latinos, they hypothesize that churches provide valuable and otherwise elusive civic resources.

Surveys measure religious behaviors in a number of ways. The most common measure by far is church attendance. The American National Election Study asks a two-part question of respondents:

> "Lots of things come up that keep people from attending religious services even if they want to. Thinking about your life these days, do you ever attend religious services apart from occasional weddings, baptisms, or funerals?"

If the respondent answers in the affirmative, a follow up question asks "Do you go to religious services every week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never?" A significant body of research demonstrates that individuals who most often attend religious services tend to hold more conservative political positions (e.g., Wald, Kellstedt, and Leege 1993) and more often prefer Republican candidates (e.g., Green 2007; see also Fowler et al. 2010 and Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014).[11] Other measures also exist, especially on surveys with a specific focus on religion, including the frequency of prayer and reading religious texts. Some also tap into behaviors specific to a particular faith tradition, such as Catholic practices regarding praying the rosary and participating in confession, or charismatic practices like speaking in tongues. A variety of these may also be combined as an index of religiosity, tapping both corporate and personal practices (e.g., Kellstedt et al. 1996). Layman (2001) does this to construct a "low commitment" variable for respondents who demonstrate minimal religious behavior on a consistent basis.

[11] Although, African Americans tend to vote Democratic regardless of church attendance.

The literature confirms that all three of these dimensions of religion—belonging, believing, and behaving—are relevant determinants of political attitudes and behaviors (Layman 1997; 2001; Green 2007; Olson and Warber 2008; Guth, Kellstedt, and Smidt 2009; Fowler et al. 2010; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014). It also demonstrates that, while distinct, the three Bs are closely related concepts (if not at times interrelated), which can make them messy and require great care in research. For example, religious affiliation may be easy to determine for Roman Catholics, but Protestants can be more difficult to peg. Christian and non-Christian traditions alike include groups and subgroups within tradition, which can at times make them difficult to categorize. Behaviors can differ across tradition, which can make it hard to find uniformly applicable measures of such concepts as religiosity and to a lesser extent traditionalism. Assumptions are dangerous, especially when dealing with a concept as diverse and complex as religion. Certain measures of religiosity may be relevant to differing extents across traditions. One must be careful not to falsely assume a measure's uniform applicability and accidentally skew a respondent's (or tradition's) religiosity or level of observance.

Finally, these dimensions are at times difficult to disentangle from one another. Take, for example, a respondent reporting that she or he is "evangelical" or "born again." Is being born again a religious experience? Or is it a statement of belief that theologically aligns one with evangelicalism? Or is it an affiliation with evangelical Protestantism and a traditionalist worldview? It is potentially all three and may mean different things to different people.

If anything, these complications underscore the importance of all three of these dimensions when studying how religion structures political behaviors and attitudes, or else the picture may be incomplete. The development of the literature suggests a growing appreciation for this understanding. However, the research on social identities offers the prospect of another possible dimension of religion's political relevance that is not fully accounted for in the three Bs.

Conceptualizing Religion as a Social Identity

Having now reviewed the principal ways in which political scientists measure religion, a more careful understanding of not only what these measures mean but also what they do not mean may be established. Religion is not only an individual but also a social enterprise (Durkheim [1912] 1995). The three Bs partially account for its social component. In particular, belonging and behaving involve a very obvious social aspect. Belonging implies that an individual affiliates with a particular group. Behaving can involve social activities, e.g., religious services, that often represent a respondent's level of religious commitment in quantitative research. In this sense, the Bs are able to measure one's membership in a group and the extent to which one interacts with fellow group members and demonstrates behaviors associated with the group. Although less obvious, believing involves a social aspect too. Since religious groups teach and interpret beliefs, the religious community provides a critical mediating structure for the development of personal belief systems.

The Bs do not, however, measure the sense of psychological attachment one may feel toward their religious group *as a social group* per se. This is important because other literatures have demonstrated that the political relevance of a social identity—such as race, gender, national identity, and arguably a party identity, to name a few—depends upon and varies according to the nature and strength of an individual's identification with the group.

Social identity theory (SIT) provides a well-developed theoretical perspective to explore this possibility. It views society as comprised of many different social groups, each with relative status and power (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel 1981). An individual can develop a sense of psychological attachment to a group based on attributes, characteristics, experiences, ideas, beliefs, or perspectives held in common (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Gurin et al. 1980; Tajfel 1981; Miller et al. 1981; Conover 1988; Chong and Rogers 2005). Through this attachment, an individual can also derive a sense of personal identity, at least in part if not primarily, from this social group. When that happens, a social identity is formed. This social identity fosters an ability for group members to establish in-group versus out-group distinctions for the purposes of contextualizing oneself relative to the broader world, assigning value to persons, actions, or beliefs, and favoring or discriminating against some versus others (e.g., Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel 1981).

An important point of clarification is warranted. Namely, group identities exist in gradations. At the most basic level, one is a member of a group, assigned by virtue of shared characteristics. To be a member of a group requires no sense of belonging on a

psychological level, but can be merely a matter of ascription. This occurs often, for example, in demography and the social sciences when individuals are typed or categorized. If a person would describe one's own self in the same terms, that membership becomes an identity. Group identification implies not only that one shares characteristics with a group, but that one is self-aware of this and possesses a sense of belonging to the group. According to social identity theory, this sense of belonging enables an individual to draw on that group identity to inform one's own sense of self. As Conover (1984) explains, group identification involves not only self-identification but also a psychological attachment to the group (also Tajfel 1978; Gibson and Gouws 2000). Taken one final step farther, we find the concept of group consciousness. In this, persons are not only self-aware and psychologically attached to a group to which they belong, but this identity is also highly salient and therefore capable of exerting influence over attitudes and behaviors.[12]

The terminology used for this concept is not necessarily shared throughout the literature, and different scholars may nuance their understandings (and measures) in ways that are also not shared across the literature. Many refer to "group consciousness," others to a specific concept of group consciousness termed "linked fate" (e.g., Dawson 1994), or on a more basic level to a politicized or politically relevant group identity. Depending on

[12] For the purposes of clarity, the terms group identity and social identity are at times used interchangeably. They are closely related. "Group identity" refers specifically to one's *self-identification* with and psychological *attachment* to a group. "Social identity" refers specifically to the *sense of self* one has as influenced by and/or derived from that group, and implies the broader assumptions of social identity theory.

the specific context, this dissertation employs each of these terms, providing clarification as necessary.

In discussing social identity theory as it pertains to religion, I most often refer to religious "identity" and how that identity rises in salience to become politicized or politically relevant. I do this for two reasons. First, some religions refer to "consciousness" or "religious consciousness" as a spiritual state of being with theological connotations, which is not intended here. To avoid coopting that term and creating unnecessary confusion, I generally shy away from the phrase religious "consciousness" as it relates to social identity theory. Second, referring to identity and its process of becoming more salient or becoming politicized provides the conceptual benefit of emphasizing a dynamic aspect of religious group identity. Fluidity is an important feature of contemporary religion. Religious identity it is not necessarily static.[13] It may ebb and flow in salience depending on circumstances; causally relevant in structuring attitudes or influencing behavior at some times but not at others.

The race literature on group identity and consciousness offers the best and most developed example of the political relevance of a salient social group identity. We find in this literature some key findings that prove instructive when considering if and how religion may be conceptualized as a social identity. First, the literature clearly demonstrates the presence of race consciousness among African Americans (Matthews

[13] Another point of clarification concerning the use of terms is that "religious identity" is intended to imply "religious group identity." The race literature often refers to "racial identity" as short for "racial group identity." By context, "group" is implied. For the sake of simplicity, the same convention is generally adopted here.

and Prothro 1966; Gurin et al. 1980; Miller et al. 1981; Conover 1988; Dawson 1994; Chong and Rogers 2005). Second, while many studies have identified this politicized racial identity, they also approach the concept of a racial identity in a variety of ways. For example, some view racial identity as a sense of in-group closeness within one's race (Matthews and Prothro 1966; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999) while others view it as a multidimensional construct that involves multiple ways in which race contributes to a person's life experience (e.g., Miller et al. 1981; Harris-Lacewell and Junn 2007).

Third, a significant subset of the literature looks at the presence of "linked fate," such as the black utility heuristic in Dawson (1994), where individual African Americans view their own life chances as inextricably bound together with those of their broader racial group. This often involves a sense of common interest or common strategy to achieve a desired end. Fourth, despite some diversity in their approach, the studies of group consciousness and linked fate among African Americans share several common threads. Namely, the presence of a politicized racial identity emerges from a shared sense of minority status, discrimination, and socioeconomic disadvantage; it can also emerge from the perception of threat against their racial group (e.g., Grant and Brown 1995). Finally, these studies demonstrate numerous political effects including increased participation and solidarity, as well as effects on other political behaviors, reasoning, and attitudes (e.g., Chong and Rogers 2005).

While this has all been clearly shown among African Americans, the extent to which these findings hold for other minority groups is contested. Some have found group consciousness to exist among Asian Americans (Lien 2001) and Latinos (Masuoka 2006;

Sanchez and Masuoka 2010), but effects can vary by national origin. This is due in large part to the presence of panethnic identities and multiple nations of origin, which make for a more complex situation among non-black minorities. As Jones-Correa and Leal (1996, 218) explain:

> Latino panethnicity if a complex phenomenon, differing not only by a range of demographic characteristics but also among those using panethnicity as a primary or secondary identification…. one needs to think about panethnicity as part of a constellation of individuals' multiple identifications and that individuals may manage these identities in very different ways.

For this reason McClain et al. (2009) urge caution when trying to extrapolate race consciousness and linked fate to non-black minorities. For example, linked fate among African Americans is rooted in shared cultural experience, which may not translate to panethnic identities. Many view racial identity as a multidimensional construct (McClain et al. 2009), which complicates a shared sense of minority status, common interest, and racial identity among non-black minorities with different national origins and panethnic identities. While race consciousness has been shown among these groups, the effect is not nearly as strong as among African Americans.

So, what about religion? When viewed through the lens of social identity theory, might religion demonstrate some of the same dynamics? The literature suggests four criteria that must be satisfied for group consciousness to exist. First, a group must be a meaningful social category to which people can belong. Second, a sense of psychological attachment to the group must exist. Third, this attachment must be powerful enough to

inform one's own sense of personal identity, creating a social identity. Finally, this identity must become politicized in order to establish causal linkages between an identity's in-group/out-group distinctions and political attitudes and behaviors.

As to the first of these criteria, the vast majority of Americans claim a religious affiliation, despite a recent uptick in those claiming to be religiously unaffiliated. The Pew Forum (2009) finds that about 70% of Americans claim a religious tradition that (broadly speaking) falls under the Christian umbrella. Another 6% claim a non-Christian tradition. Nearly one-quarter of Americans claim no religion, but only a small subset of this group claims the label agnostic or atheist. Most (15% of the overall American population) simply claim no religion in particular. Half of these express a belief in heaven and nearly a third occasionally attend a worship service. Looking at the population as a whole, slightly more than half of Americans believe that religion is "very important" to their life and another quarter of Americans say religion is at least "somewhat important." Clearly, religion is a meaningful category to many Americans that remains a part of their everyday life.

Can religious adherents develop a sense of psychological attachment to their religion? The fact that more than half of Americans believe that religion is "very important" to their life suggests that they can. For these respondents, religion is salient enough to elicit the strongest affirmative response to the survey question. Behavior patterns also suggest this to be the case. About one third of Americans report attending religious services on a weekly basis, and another third report attending at least once or twice a month. More than half of Americans (55%) report praying at least once a day, and

about one third (35%) claim to read scripture at least once a week. These suggest that religion is not only a meaningful social category but also one that is salient enough to at least suggest the presence of an underlying psychological attachment.

Moreover, is this psychological attachment sufficiently powerful to inform one's personal sense of identity? Sociological work suggests that it is. For example, Smith's (1998) influential study of American evangelicals explicates a theory of "subcultural identity" that aligns well with the social identity perspective. As Smith summarizes:

> Religion survives and can thrive in pluralistic, modern society by embedding itself in subcultures that offer satisfying morally orienting collective identities which provide adherents meaning and belonging. (118)

And also:

> In a pluralistic society, those religious groups will be relatively stronger which better possess and employ the cultural tools needed to create both clear distinction from and significant engagement and tension with other relevant outgroups, short of becoming genuinely countercultural. (119)

In this, Smith "nests [the] problem of human meaning within the larger problem of collective identity" (119).

This dissertation shares a similar but distinct concern from Smith. His primary focus is how religion—specifically evangelical Protestantism—can thrive when seemingly at odds with its social context, especially a social context that questions its plausibility. He locates this in evangelicalism's power as a locus of subcultural identity. My concern dovetails in part. I share an interest in religion's ability to establish a

collective identity, although not specifically for evangelical Protestants. Rather, does religion as a social category broadly possess the requisite features to sustain a social identity? If so, can this social identity become politicized and evolve into a causal mechanism that links this identity with specific political attitudes and behaviors? This empirical focus of this dissertation begins to shed light on these questions, but enough previous research exists to at least suggest this as a strong possibility.

Conceptualizing religion as a social identity presents some notable benefits. First, it stands alongside the three Bs to capture another dimension of religion's political relevance; namely, the explanatory potency of religion as a collective identity. Second, it may also shed additional light on the relationship between the individual and group-level facets of religion, since the psychological processes involved with developing a social identity stand squarely at this intersection of the individual and the group. Third, it offers a more dynamic understanding of religion in line with the increased fluidity of contemporary religion. This point deserves specific focus. In related research, Leal and Patterson (2014, 24) found preliminary evidence that religious change may be consequential in politics, writing that:

> "belonging" may still be a relevant measure in the study of religion and politics, although it need to be seen as a dynamic—and not a static and ascriptive—variable. While political science research understands, in theory, that a great deal of affiliational churn has taken place, this has rarely been incorporated into quantitative research. Instead, the focus has moved to the "behavior" and "belief" measures that cut across different denominational traditions.

Indeed, many recent studies have highlighted the high level of religious churn and change. The Pew Forum (2009) found that half of Americans today have changed religious affiliation in their life, and that half of Latino evangelicals are converts, many of whom are former Roman Catholics. With this kind of fluidity, a case could be made that religious affiliation has qualitatively changed over the past half-century, and if the way in which religious affiliation is conceptualized in research does not follow suit, it risks running headlong into an Inigo Montoya problem: *"You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."*[14]

Leal and Patterson (2014) posit that the emergence of belief and behavior as now-common measures of religion demonstrate the responsiveness of researchers to "the inability of affiliation alone to illustrate how religion shapes politics in America's more fluid, restructured religious landscape" but that comparatively less attention has been paid to the way in which affiliation should be viewed (6). If Americans change affiliation so frequently, is it still as reliable a measure of "belonging" as it is so often styled? Or might this be conceptually augmented by a measure of religion as a social identity? This is not unlike the race literature, which demonstrates that the political relevance of race can be a dynamic and multidimensional construct with political effects that involve social psychological processes that vary in salience and are responsive to the broader political environment. This is precisely why this chapter brings religion into conversation with these literatures.

[14] *The Princess Bride* (1987).

Developing Measures of Religious Identity

Scholars have approached the concepts of group identity and group consciousness in a variety of nuanced ways. Consequently, multiple approaches to measuring these concepts exist. Based on a researcher's theoretical perspective, some facets are included and others are not. This section identifies six measurement approaches from the literature on social identity, with much of them focusing on race consciousness and national identity. It then translates them to religion for the purpose of exploring potential social identity measures for religion.

The first of these approaches comes from Miller et al. (1981). These scholars argue that group consciousness emerges along four dimensions, which they identify as group identification, polar power, polar affect, and individual vs. system blame. For each of these, they develop a single measure or series of measures. Group identification, the researchers refer to as a feeling of belonging to a particular social category, and the measure is intended to distinguish between ascriptive membership and self-categorization. Their measure is: "Which of these groups do you feel particularly close to—people who are more like you in their ideas and interests and feelings about things?" Respondents were offered a list of social categories and asked whether they strongly identified, identified, or did not identify with the group.

The concept of polar power expresses either "satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a group's current status, power, or material resources in relation to that of the outgroup" (496). This measure drew on answers to two survey questions about the influence of the dominant group versus another group, and resulted in a score that corresponds to "too

little" or "too much" influence. The researchers capture the concept of polar affect similar to polar power, but instead of asking about the relative power or status of a group, they instead ask about "how positive individuals feel toward various groups." Subtracting out-group from in-group affect reveals the relative difference in affect, with higher numbers equating to more polarized affect.

Finally, individual vs. system blame is defined as "the belief that the responsibility for a group's low status in society is attributable either to individual failings or to inequalities in the social system" (497). The researchers measure this with force choice questions that ask respondents to explain the causes for various problems facing groups, including ones with which they may identify. The upshot from this is whether or not a respondent feels as though the deck is stacked against a group with which they identify, thereby creating systematically disadvantage beyond an individual's control.

Harris-Lacewell and Junn (2007) include many of the same concepts as Miller et al. (1981) but add three additional measures for consideration. Their study also asks respondents about the importance of race to their ideas about politics, whether it is more important to be black, black and American, or just American, and a series of cultural identity questions that aim to assess whether a sense of group-pride is also part of group consciousness.[15]

[15] Harris-Lacewell and Junn (2007) also included Dawson's (1994) linked fate measure, which did not yield results that conformed to their expectations. Their three unique measures, intended to tap a sense of group pride, are their study's most notable contribution to the present measurement conversation. They present these as filling a conceptual void in the closeness measures à la Miller at al. (1981). For present purposes,

Dawson (1994) presents one of the most famous and parsimonious sets of measures with the concept of "linked fate." He asks respondents: "Do you think what happens generally to black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?" In the case of an affirmative response, a follow up question is asked: "Will it affect you a lot, some, or not very much." These are intended to assess whether the respondent views their own interests and life chances as being connected with those of their racial group.

Leighley and Vedlitz (1999) focus specifically on groups consciousness's effects on participation. They acknowledge the many dimensions of group consciousness in measures developed in previous studies, but they instead offer a more parsimonious approach of two combined measures that assess perceived closeness to one's own group relative to other groups. This decision is informed by research that has found causal effects on participation via simple measures of group identity but not more complex measures of consciousness like Miller et al. (1981) (Wilcox and Gomez 1990). These measures essentially comprise the first of Miller et al.'s (1981) four measures, with the perceived closeness to one's own group being placed in relation to the perceived closeness other groups.

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the index that I later refer to as following Harris-Lacewell and Junn combines these together absent the linked fate measure, in order to augment a measure of perceived group closeness with a measure of group pride. See also footnote 17.

Chong and Rogers (2005) combine measures of both group identity and group consciousness.[16] For identity measures, they utilize a linked fate measure like Dawson (1994) and a set of four measures of group autonomy, e.g., "Black people should shop in black-owned stores." Their group consciousness measures assess group influence, perceived discrimination, political efficacy, and an endorsement of collective strategies to accomplish group goals. Their measure of group influence is similar to Miller et al.'s polar power measure, and the perceived discrimination measure is similar to Miller et al.'s individual vs. system blame measure. Chong and Rogers's political efficacy measure reads, "If enough blacks vote, they can make a difference in who gets elected President." Finally, the belief in collective strategies measure reads,

> "To have power and improve their position in the United States: Black people should be more active in black organizations; or each black person should work hard to improve his or her own personal situation" (370-373).

Huddy and Khatib (2007) offer a sixth and final set of measures. These were developed to measure national identity via gut-level group attachments in order to avoid the pitfalls of ideological biases. They also have a strong theoretical rooting in social identity theory. The set includes four separate questions that measure the importance of the group to the individual, whether the individual views herself as a "typical" group member, how well the group serves as a personal descriptor, and the extent to which an individual refers to the group as "we" versus "them."

[16] This demonstrates the confusion that can arise from the inconsistent terminology and measures of these concepts. What this study terms as measures of group identity may be considered as consciousness in other studies.

Three important considerations deserve attention when translating these various specifications to religion. First, each of the studies from which these measures are drawn has shown meaningful results, so they all deserve consideration when evaluating social identity measures for religion. Second, many of these studies draw on measures that are either identical or closely related to others. For the sake of parsimony, some closely related measures can be collapsed into a single measure in order to eliminate near duplicates. Third, some of these measures were designed to test race consciousness among specific groups while others are more general in nature. When translating them to religion, their scope of applicability must be inclusive enough so as not to be biased toward a particular religion or religious orientation but also to not be overly vague.

After collapsing similar concepts into a single measure, I have translated these six sets of measures to religion and the result is twelve distinct components: (1) Group identification or closeness, (2) polar power, (3) polar affect, (4) individual vs. system blame, (5) group importance to politics, (6) linked fate, (7) collective strategies, (8) political efficacy, (9) group importance, (10) viewing oneself as a "typical" group member, (11) viewing the group as a personal descriptor, and (12) preferring "we" instead of "them" language about the group.[17]

[17] For sake of parsimony, I included only one of the three items unique to Harris-Lacewell and Junn (2007), since the three measures were all intended to tap a more general sense of group pride. The importance of one's group to politics is the most conceptually distinct from other measures among this constellation of questions and was included. Their force choice questions about the importance of one's racial group relative to nationality is not too far removed from a sense of closeness to the group, and did not produce statistically significant results in their experiment. Their measures of racial cultural identity produced mixed results, but those that produced meaningful marginal differences also tracked directionally with the group closeness measures.

Table 1 displays how these survey questions align with the original sets of social identity measures. Here is the question wording for the questions, which as discussed below, are tested via a University of Texas at Austin undergraduate survey:

1. Group identification or closeness: How close do you feel to the following groups—people who are more like you in their ideas and interests and feeling about things? [Groups: Christians, Muslims, Jews, atheists]
2. Polar power: Do you think that the following groups have too little, too much, are about the right amount of influence in politics and society? [Groups: Christians, Muslims, Jews, atheists]
3. Polar affect: How warmly you feel toward each of the following groups? [Groups: Christians, Muslims, Jews, atheists]
4. Individual vs. system blame: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Discrimination against [Christian] values and beliefs is a problem in this country."[18] ("Christian" can be replaced with other religious affiliations as appropriate in questions 4-12)
5. Importance of group to politics: How important are [Christian] values of your religion to your ideas about politics?

[18] In previous research, individual vs. system blame measures attempt to gage the extent to which one perceives their social category to be systematically disadvantaged, and for that disadvantage to extend by proxy to the individual. Discrimination presents a closely related concept and a more parsimonious one than Miller et al.'s (1981) four-part measure. Discrimination also aligns with a component of Chong and Rogers, enabling the elimination of a near-duplicate question.

6. Linked fate: Do you think that what happens generally to [Christians] in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life? Will it affect you a lot, some, or not very much?
7. Collective strategies: Which of the following is the best way for [Christians] to be involved in politics: Participate in [Christian] political groups, or be involved in politics on their own?
8. Political efficacy: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "If enough [Christians] vote, they can make a difference in who gets elected President."
9. Group importance: How important is being [Christian] to you?
10. Viewing oneself as a "typical" group member: To what extent do you see yourself as a typical [Christian]?
11. Viewing the group as a personal descriptor: How well does the term [Christian] describe you?
12. Preferring "we" instead of "them" language about the group: When talking about [Christians], how often do you say "we" instead of "them?"

Table 2.1 Alignment of Social Identity Measures with Survey Questions on Religion

Study	Social Identity Measure	Corresponding Survey Question
Miller et al. (1981)	Group identification	1
	Polar power	2
	Polar affect	3
	Individual-system blame	4
Harris-Lacewell and Junn (2007)	Group identification	1
	Polar power	2
	Polar affect	3
	Individual-system blame	4
	Importance of group to politics	5
Dawson (1994)	Linked fate	6
Leighley and Vedlitz (1999)	Closeness to one's own group	1
	Closeness to other groups	1
Chong and Rogers (2005)	Linked fate	6
	Group influence (polar power)	2
	Group discrimination	4
	Collective strategies	7
	Political efficacy	8
Huddy and Khatib (2007)	Group importance	9
	Typical group member	10
	Group as a personal descriptor	11
	"We" instead of "them"	12

Data and Results

In order to explore these as possible social identity measures for religion, the twelve survey questions above were included on a survey of 1024 undergraduate students at the University of Texas at Austin. The survey was conducted online via SurveyGizmo and the Blackboard course management system. Students were offered course credit for

their participation. Of those who completed the survey, 881 respondents stated a religious preference. This includes 217 Roman Catholics and 331 who responded either Protestant or Christian. Another 167 claimed no religion and no other religious group has more than 38 respondents. Due to the small number of non-Christian categories, most analyses here will focus on Christians.

This section analyzes these measures in three ways. First, it looks at the internal consistency of the index items. Second, it looks at the relationship between the religious identity measures and the three Bs. Third, it assesses how these measures perform in the context of a model.

Of the six possible religious identity measures for religion, five are indices of different facets of social identity. For these, it is important to assess the internal consistency of the constituent parts. The indices were translated directly from social identity measures in related literatures which had showed significant results; my hypothesis was that these religious identity measures would demonstrate similar facets of social identity. Assessing internal consistency through inner-item correlations, alpha scores, and correlation matrices will test the validity of this assumption and potentially expose possible outliers that could compromise the integrity of the index as a measure.

One other assumption warrants mention. Namely, each constituent element is given equal weight as a facet of social identity. For example, the Miller et al. approach has four aspects: group identification, polar power, polar affect, and individual versus system blame. Each of these four aspects corresponds to a survey question. Group identification simply gages how close a respondent feels to their religious group on a 0-

100 thermometer scale, with a higher rating equating to a greater sense of closeness. Individual vs. system blame assesses the degree to which a respondent believes the deck is stacked against Christians so to speak, utilizing a question about perceived discrimination against Christians (see also footnote 15).

Polar power and polar affect are a bit more complex. These measures each compare two ratings, a perception of one's own group relative to a perception of other groups. As an example, polar affect subtracts a 0-100 thermometer rating of a respondent's feelings toward Christians from their feelings towards Muslims, Jews, and atheists. The result is three scores of relative affect: (1) Christians minus Muslims, (2) Christians minus Jews, (3) Christians minus atheists. A positive number indicates the degree to which the respondent has warmer feelings toward Christianity than other groups. These scores are then compiled into a single score of polar affect. Here is an example: Respondent 1 reports a feeling of 100 toward Christians, 75 toward Jews, 50, toward Muslims, and 25 toward atheists. The difference in feelings for each group is:

Christians minus Muslims	100 - 75 = 25
Christians minus Jews	100 - 50 = 50
Christians minus atheists	100 - 25 = 75

Notice that a higher score means a greater difference in warmth, i.e., greater polarity. There is not a great deal of difference in how this respondent feels toward Christians relative to Muslims, but there is a much larger difference in how they feel toward atheists. The overall polar affect score is the mean of these three scores; in the case of this respondent, 50.

Of course, polar affect only comprises one of four aspects in the Miller et al. style measure of social identity. In order to combine all four of these together, the score for each one—group identity, polar power, polar affect, individual vs. system blame—is standardized on a 0-to-1 scale. The overall measure of social identity is the mean of all four of these aspects. Again, an example: Respondent 1's standardized scores are as follows: Group identification = 1.0; polar power = 0.75; polar affect = 0.50; individual vs. system blame = 0.25.[19] I then create an index, where the final score of social identity according to the Miller et al. framework is:

$$\textit{Social identity} = \frac{(\textit{Group identification} + \textit{polar power} + \textit{polar affect} \; \textit{individual vs. system blame})}{4}$$

Thus, for this respondent, we have:

$$0.625 = \frac{(1.0 + 0.75 + 0.50 + 0.25)}{4}$$

When correlated, the items within the Miller et al. scale all show statistically significant, positive relationships. Most are moderate, although group identification

[19] Note that the direction of a constituent item's scale may change depending on the theory underlying its inclusion. For example, a higher polar affect score suggests a stronger social identity, which is why we subtract the out-group from the in-group feeling of warmth. However, polar power works in the opposite direction. Here, a sensitivity toward out-groups having more power than their own group would suggest a stronger social identity, so we subtract in-group power from out-group power in order for a higher score to equate to a stronger sense of social identity.

shows a somewhat weaker correlation with individual vs. system blame (Table 2.2). The Cronbach's Alpha for the set is .637 (Table 2.3).

Table 2.2 Correlation Matrix for Miller et al. Index Items

		Group ID	Polar Power	Polar Affect	Indiv-Sys Blame
Group ID	Pearson Corr.	1	.410***	.526***	.229***
	N	873	860	867	542
Polar Power	Pearson Corr.	.410***	1	.441***	.472***
	N	860	863	857	535
Polar Affect	Pearson Corr.	.526***	.411***	1	.373***
	N	867	857	874	541
Indiv-Sys Blame	Pearson Corr.	.229***	.472***	.373***	1
	N	542	535	541	543

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

Table 2.3 Internal Consistency of Religious Identity Indices

	Miller et al.	Harris Junn	Leighley Ved	Chong Rogers	Huddy Khatib
Cronbach's Alpha	0.637	0.716	0.852	0.546	0.876

For the analog of Harris-Lacewell and Junn (2007), one additional measure is added to the Miller et al. index; namely, the perceived importance of the individual's group to politics. All of the correlations are otherwise the same except for this new measure, which also has a statistically significant, positive correlation to other items in the index at a moderate degree (Table 2.4). The alpha score for this index is .716 (Table 2.3).

Table 2.4 Correlation Matrix for Harris-Lacewell and Junn Index Items

		Group ID	Polar Power	Polar Affect	Indiv-Sys Blame	Group Import
Group ID	Pearson Corr.	1	.410***	.526***	.229***	.369***
	N	873	860	867	542	542
Polar Power	Pearson Corr.	.410***	1	.441***	.472***	.412***
	N	860	863	857	535	535
Polar Affect	Pearson Corr.	.526***	.411***	1	.373***	.336***
	N	867	857	874	541	540
Indiv-Sys Blame	Pearson Corr.	.229***	.472***	.373***	1	.508***
	N	542	535	541	543	542
Group Import	Pearson Corr.	.369***	.412***	.336***	.508***	1
	N	542	535	542	542	543

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

The Leighley and Vedlitz (1999) style index works very similarly to the Miller et al. polar affect measure described above, although it instead utilizes perceived closeness to one's group relative to others. The correlations of interest when analyzing the components of this index are the differences between groups. In this case, Christians comprise the in-group, and the out-groups are Muslims, Jews, and atheists. Table 2.5 displays the correlations, which are all statistically significant and positive, and of a similar moderate-to-high magnitude. The Cronbach's Alpha (Table 2.3) for this index is .852.

Table 2.5 Correlation Matrix for Leighley and Vedlitz Index Items

		Chr-Muslim	Chr-Jew	Chr-Atheist
Chr-Muslim	Pearson Corr.	1	.668***	.688***
	N	873	869	871
Chr-Jew	Pearson Corr.	.668***	1	.692***
	N	869	869	867
Chr-Atheist	Pearson Corr.	.688***	.692***	1
	N	871	867	871

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

The index based on Chong and Rogers (2005) utilizes three new components not present in the previously discussed indices. These include a linked fate measure, a measure of whether or not an individual prefers group-based political action, i.e., collective strategies, and a measure of their group's perceived collective political efficacy. Each is represented by a dummy variable.

The correlation matrix (Table 2.6) shows positive and statistically significant correlates for all variables in the index. The magnitude varies more than do the other scales, with some demonstrating particularly weak correlations. Collective strategy tends to correlate fairly weak across the board, as does political efficacy. Linked fate correlates weakly except with the measure of group discrimination, which is moderate. The Cronbach's Alpha (Table 2.3) for this index is among the lowest of the index approaches at .546. Collective strategies is the only item that would increase Cronbach's Alpha if deleted, but that increase would be marginal, to .592, and the Corrected Item-Total Correlation value is also fairly low at just .220. Leong and Austin (2006) suggest that removing an item is only beneficial when the Corrected Item-Total Correlation value exceeds 0.4.

Table 2.6 Correlation Matrix for Chong and Rogers Index Items

		Linked Fate	Group Influ	Group Discrim	Collective Strat	Political Effic
Linked Fate	Pearson Corr.	1	.254***	.401***	.142***	.210***
	N	538	530	537	532	534
Group Influ	Pearson Corr.	.254***	1	.472***	.094**	.087**
	N	530	863	535	530	533
Group Discrim	Pearson Corr.	.401***	.472***	1	.268***	.185***
	N	537	535	543	537	539
Collective Strat	Pearson Corr.	.142***	.094**	.268***	1	.090**
	N	532	530	537	538	536
Political Effic	Pearson Corr.	.210***	.087**	.185***	.090**	1
	N	534	533	539	536	540

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); ** is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

The four measures based on Huddy and Khatib (2007) are not shared among any of the other social identity measurement approaches. The importance of a group to oneself, the extent to which a person self-categorizes as a "typical" member of the group, and how well the group functions as a personal descriptor all have scaled response options. Here, a 10-point scale was used. The amount that one uses "we" versus "them" when talking about a group offered six response options, ranging from "all of the time" to "never." As with all of the other indices, these items were standardized on a 0-to-1 scale. Table 2.7 displays the correlation matrix of the four index items. They all demonstrate significant and positive correlations, with most being moderate in magnitude and a few being somewhat stronger; especially the group descriptor and group importance items (.789).

The Cronbach's Alpha for the index is relatively high at .876. The "we" versus "them" item has the lowest correlation to the other items. Were it to be removed from the index, the Cronbach's Alpha would rise slightly to .894, and the Corrected Item-Total Correlation is higher than .4 at .604. However, it is also worth considering whether this

item captures an important facet of social identity that might naturally not correlate as strongly with the other items in the index. Since it is not an outlier and still correlates moderately well, its inclusion does not impair the integrity of the index.

Table 2.7 Correlation Matrix for Huddy and Khatib Index Items

		Group Import	Typical Memb	Group Descript	We-Them
Group Import	Pearson Corr.	1	.669***	.789***	.553***
	N	542	540	540	540
Typical Memb	Pearson Corr.	.669***	1	.754***	.519***
	N	540	541	540	541
Group Descript	Pearson Corr.	.789***	.754***	1	.577***
	N	540	540	541	540
We-Them	Pearson Corr.	.553***	.519***	.577***	1
	N	540	541	540	542

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

Having now looked at the internal consistency of these measures, their relationship to the three Bs of religious belonging, believing, and behaving yields an additional perspective on these data. An important preliminary question when considering a new measure of religion ought to be whether it is different than existing measures of religion. Is it truly capturing another dimension of religion's political relevance or is it actually a veiled duplication of an existing measure? Table 2.7 shows correlations of each of the six religious identity measures with existing measures of believing and behaving.

Table 2.8 Correlation of Religious Identity Measures with Believing and Behaving

	Miller et al.	Harris Junn	Dawson	Leighley Ved	Chong Rogers	Huddy Khatib
Literalism	.434***	.475***	.223***	.333***	.398***	.484***
Church Attend	.390***	.464***	.239***	.481***	.347***	.551***

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

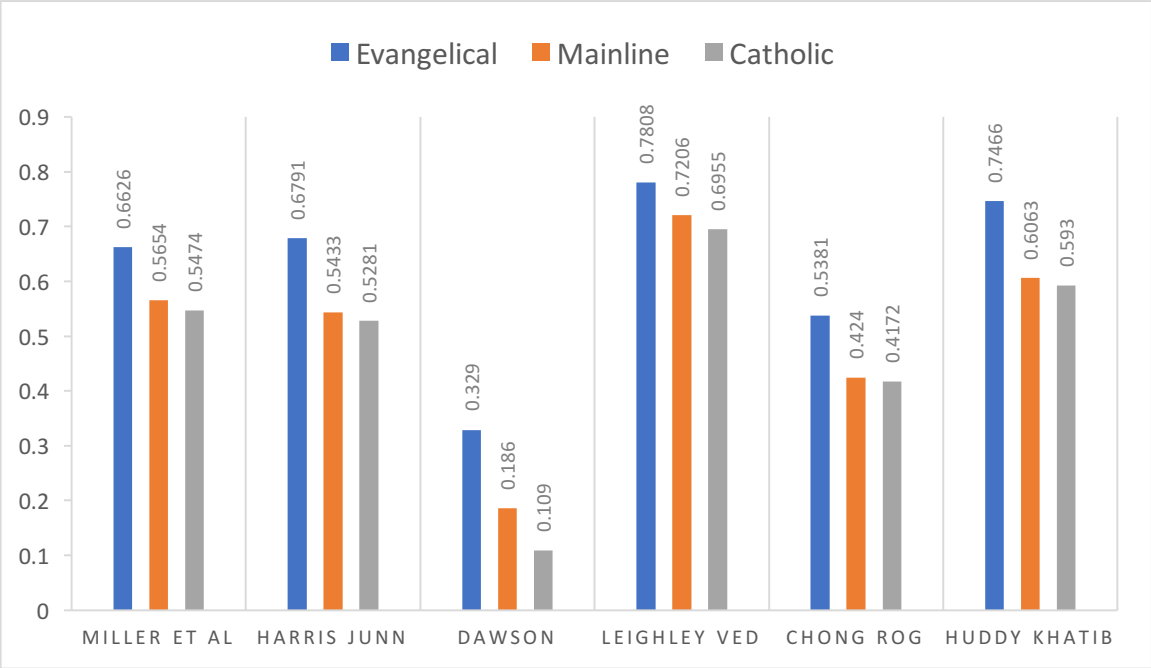
As we might expect, each of the six measures shows a significant, positive relationship with believing and behaving. In this case, believing is represented by one's view of scripture. Behaving is represented by frequency of church attendance. None of the correlations is so high as to suggest that these measures are duplicates or near-duplicates of existing measures. This aligns with my theory that religious identity presents a distinct dimension of religion's political relevance that heretofore has gone undeveloped in the literature. Most are in the weak-to-moderate range. The Dawson-style (linked fate) measure is the least correlated to the view of scripture and church attendance. The Huddy and Khatib measure is most correlated, squarely in the moderate range at with view of scripture (.484) and church attendance (.551).

Comparing the means of these measures across the common religion measures also helps to gain a better understanding of them. Figure 2.1 displays the relationship between these measures of religious identity and religious affiliation. For each of the six measures, evangelical Protestants demonstrate the highest level of religious identity. Roman Catholics demonstrate the lowest level, with mainline Protestants in the middle.[20] Because each of the six measurement approaches was standardized on a 0-to-1 scale, they are comparable to one other in this regard. The degree of difference between the groups

[20] Religious affiliation options on the survey included Roman Catholic, Protestant, Christian, other religious groups and a no religion option. A separate question asked whether the respondent was a "born again" or "evangelical" Christian. Variables were constructed to classify Roman Catholics according to that affiliation response, evangelical Protestants as those who responded as either "Protestant" or "Christian" and responded self-identified as evangelical or born again, and mainline Protestants as those who responded as either "Protestant" or "Christian" and did not self-identify as an evangelical or born again Christian.

varies depending on the measurement approach. The Dawson scores are on the whole much lower than the other five, but the difference between religious affiliations is also the greatest. Catholics and mainliners are fairly close to one another on every measurement approach save Dawson.

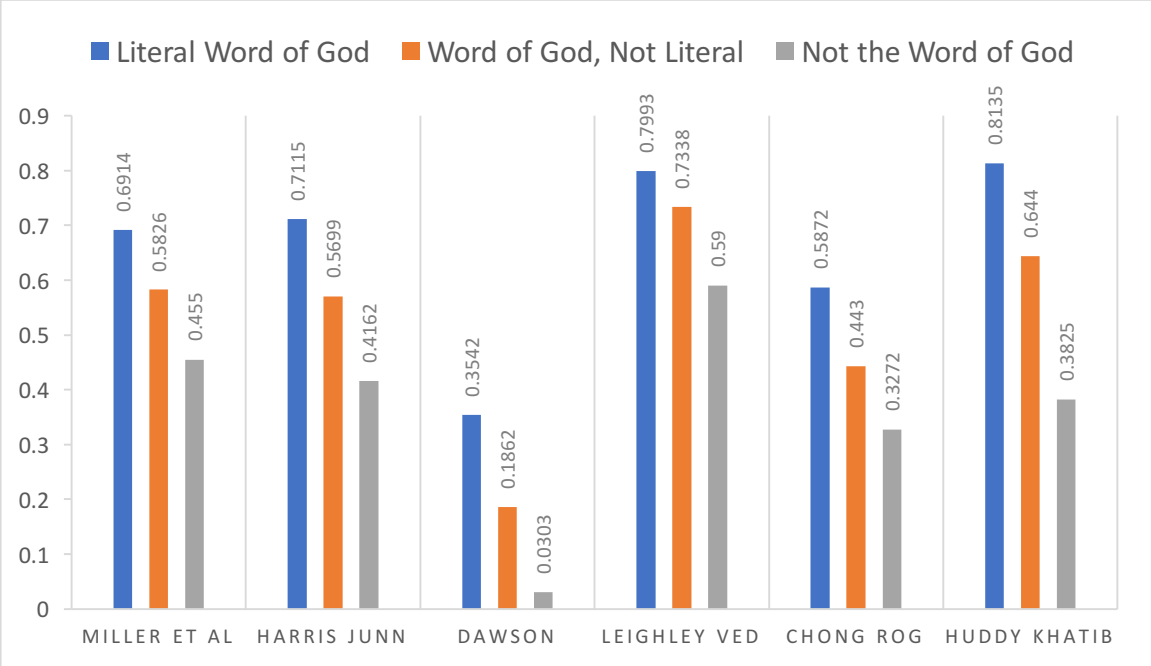
Figure 2.1 Means of Religious Identity Measures by Religious Affiliation



The survey contained a question about views toward scripture, which is one of the most commonly used measures of religious belief. The question wording in this survey referred specifically to "the Bible." Perhaps not surprisingly, each of the six religious identity measures show a higher level of religious identity among those who believe that the Bible is the Word of God and should be interpreted literally. Those who believe that the Bible was written by humans and is not the Word of God demonstrate the lowest amount of religious identity, and those who believe the Bible to be the Word of God but

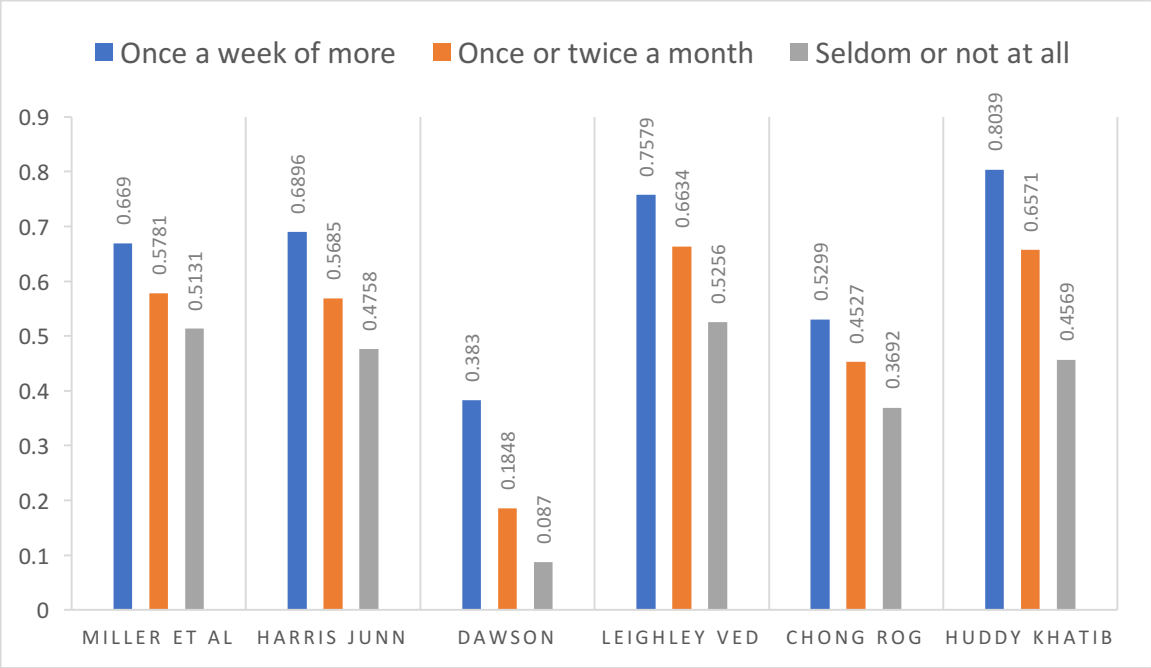
not to be interpreted literally are in the middle. Figure 2.2 displays these means. Again, the Dawson measure is lower across the board than the other five.

Figure 2.2 Means of Religious Identity Measures by View of the Bible



Finally, the survey included a measure of the frequency with which a person attends religious services, one of the most commonly used survey questions to gage a respondent's level of religiosity. The question offered six response options, which were grouped together into three broader categories of attendance patterns: at least once per week, once or twice per month, and seldom or not at all. The relationship of religious identity to church attendance patterns again breaks down as we should expect, with those who most frequently attend church demonstrating higher religious identity and those who seldom attend demonstrating lower level of religious identity. The Dawson measure is once again the lowest of the measures. Figure 2.3 displays the means.

Figure 2.3 Means of Religious Identity Measures by Frequency of Attendance



Finally, it is important to assess how these measures perform in models of political attitudes. Table 2.8 presents OLS regression results for modeling attitudes toward abortion. Abortion is a policy issue on which ample previous research has shown religion plays a key role in structuring. Response options on this dependent variable range from a low end of no access to a high end of unrestricted access, so that a negative coefficient corresponds to more conservative views toward abortion and a positive coefficient corresponds to more liberal views. The table displays seven models. Each includes fairly standard covariates for models of opinion: party identification, income, gender, and race.[21] Two conspicuous absences are age and education, since the data are a

[21] Income is measured as perceived income of one's family, since this survey used a student sample.

student sample and consequently have relatively little variation. Each model also includes common measures for the three Bs: church attendance (for behaving), view of scripture (for belief), and dummy variables for evangelicals and Catholics, with other Protestants as the base category (belonging). Finally, the first model contains no measure of religious identity, while each of the following six include one of the religious identity measures (denoted across the top of the table).

Table 2.8 Modeling Attitudes Toward Abortion (OLS)

	No Religious ID	Miller et al	Harris Junn	Dawson
Constant	4.557***	4.921***	4.910***	4.567***
	(.328)	(.344)	(.334)	(.336)
Party ID	-.170***	-.117***	-.086**	-.172***
	(.037)	(.040)	(.040)	(.037)
Income	.018	.014	.003	.013
	(.023)	(.023)	(.023)	(.024)
Female	.311***	.293***	.282***	.317***
	(.101)	(.101)	(.100)	(.102)
Black	.055	.080	.077	.024
	(.207)	(.209)	(.206)	(.210)
Hispanic	-.265*	-.344***	-.347**	-.277*
	(.145)	(.146)	(.144)	(.148)
Church Attend	-.240***	-.208***	-.173***	-.231***
	(.038)	(.039)	(.040)	(.039)
Literalism	-.212**	-.102	-.036	-.187*
	(.104)	(.109)	(.108)	(.105)
Evangelical	.064	.123	.162	.073
	(.143)	(.145)	(.143)	.145
Catholic	-.052	-.059	-.074	-.059
	(.136)	(.135)	(.134)	(.137)
Religious ID	--	-1.491***	-1.996***	-.117
	--	(.442)	(.405)	(.136)
R Squared	.239	.257	.278	.238
Adjusted R2	.221	.237	.260	.218
N	401	393	392	394

Table 2.8 continued

	Leighley Ved	Chong Rogers	Huddy Khatib
Constant	4.827*** (.354)	4.751*** (.334)	4.566*** (.325)
Party ID	-.144*** (.039)	-.132*** (.038)	-.138*** (.038)
Income	.017 (.023)	.004 (.024)	.017 (.023)
Female	.347*** (.103)	.257** (.102)	.340*** (.101)
Black	.085 (.209)	.044 (.207)	.146 (.208)
Hispanic	-.257* (.146)	-.277* (.146)	-.248* (.145)
Church Attend	-.226*** (.039)	-.211*** (.039)	-.180*** (.042)
Literalism	-.166 (.106)	-.097 (.107)	-.089 (.111)
Evangelical	.079 (.143)	.071 (.144)	.063 (.143)
Catholic	-.062 (.136)	-.079 (.136)	-.086 (.135)
Religious ID	-.736** (.357)	-1.096*** (.325)	-.055*** (.298)
R Squared	.246	.255	.259
Adjusted R2	.226	.235	.240
N	398	388	397

* p < 0.10; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01

In the first model, which contains no religious identification measure, significant negative effects exist for party identification and Hispanic, and female has a significant positive effect on opinion.[22] Looking at the religious covariates, behaving and believing both are statistically significant. Frequency of church attendance and a literal interpretation of scripture both have a significant negative effect. No effect is found for religious belonging.

[22] This uses a 1-to-7 party identification scale from strongly Democratic (1) to strongly Republican (7).

In the second model, which adds the Miller et al. style religious identity measure into the mix, we see some changes. The effects for party identification, Hispanic, and female all remain. The most significant change is that religious identity has a significant negative effect, meaning that a stronger religious identity leads to more restrictive attitudes toward abortion. The church attendance covariate retains its negative effect. However, when religious identity is added to the model, the measure of biblical literalism drops below conventional levels of statistical significance. This suggests not only that religious identity is a good predictor in this model, but it may also be a better and more appropriate predictor than religious belief. This second model also explains slightly more variance than does the first, with a slightly higher adjusted R-squared (.237 compared to .221).[23]

The third model includes the Harris-Lacewell and Junn style measure for religious identity. The results are very similar to the model with the Miller et al. measure. The statistically significant effects are all the same. This should be expected because the religious identity measures are themselves very similar, sharing all but one component. This component appears to have an impact, though. The effect of religious identity is stronger in this model, with a coefficient of -1.996 compared to -1.491 in the Miller et al. model. Also, the adjusted R-squared is higher (.260), suggesting a better fit.

In the fourth model, the Dawson-style measure of religious identity seems less effective. It is not a statistically significant predictor of attitudes. While all other

[23] R-squared and adjusted R-squared values are shown for each mode. Because not all models have the same number of covariates, the adjusted R-squared statistic is discussed when comparing models.

covariates are the same, biblical literalism returns as significant in place of religious identity. The model is not as good a fit overall, with a lower adjusted R-squared of .218.

The fifth model includes the Leighley and Vedlitz style measure of religious identity. Again, significant negative effects exist for party identification, Hispanic, and church attendance, and female has a positive effect. Similar to the Miller et al. and Harris-Lacewell and Junn models, this model shows religious identity to have a statistically significant and negative effect, and biblical literalism drops from significance. Religious identity has lower substantive effect in this model, though, with a coefficient of -.736. (The coefficients are comparable across models because all are standardized on a 0-to-1 scale and the models are otherwise identical.) The adjusted R-squared for this model is .226, lower than Miller et al. and Harris-Lacewell and Junn, but higher than Dawson and the base model with no religious identity measure.

The sixth model includes the Chong and Rogers style measure for religious identity. The results are on the whole very similar to Miller et al., Harris-Lacewell and Junn, and Leighley and Vedlitz. The statistical significance and substantive effects are all quite similar. The religious identity coefficient shows a larger effect than does the Leighley and Vedlitz model, at -1.096, and the adjusted R-squared is also a little larger at .235.

The seventh and final model of abortion attitudes utilizes the Huddy and Khatib style measure of religious identity. The statistical significance of the religious identity measure is similar to those in the other models, with the exception of Dawson. However, the substantive effects of the religious identity measure in this model is smaller. With just

a coefficient of just -.055, the impact on opinion is almost negligible despite a high level of statistical significance. The adjusted R-squared for the model is .240.

In sum for these models, we find that all models with a religious identity variable (except for Dawson) perform better than does the model without religious identity. When religious identity is included, the effect of biblical literalism drops from significance. The magnitude of the religious identity coefficients varies, with the Harris-Lacewell and Junn model demonstrating the largest effect and the Huddy and Khatib model the smallest.

A second set of models looks at opinion toward public prayer at public school events like football games and graduations. Table 2.9 displays the results of these models. The dependent variable is a question that asks respondents to indicate their level of support for a policy of "allowing prayer before high school programs, such as football games and graduations." Response options range from oppose strongly to favor strongly.

Overall, the models bear many similarities to the models for abortion opinion, but there are also some notable differences. As might be expected, female drops from significance across the board in these models. Party identification remains significant in every model, just as in the abortion models. The effect is positive, meaning that Republicans are more likely to support for public prayers at school events. With one exception, there are no race effects in these models (black is has a positive effect in the Dawson model).

The religious covariates in these models show less uniformity than in the abortion models. The model without religious identity shows statistically significant, positive effects for church attendance, biblical literalism, and evangelical orientation. When

religious identity is added to the other models, some of these effects remain and others do not depending on the model. In the Miller et al. model, biblical literalism drops from significance when religious identity is added. Church attendance and evangelical remain significant albeit with somewhat smaller coefficients. In the Harris Lacewell and Junn model, both church attendance and biblical literalism lose significance, as religious identity has the largest effect of any of the models (2.343). The Harris Lacewell and Junn model also best fits the data, with an adjusted R-squared of .345 compared to the others, with the lowest (.286) being the base model with no religious identity measure.

Table 2.9 Modeling Attitudes Toward Public Prayer (OLS)

	No Religious ID	Miller et al	Harris Junn	Dawson
Constant	1.672***	1.155***	1.197***	1.628***
	(.300)	(.312)	(.303)	(.307)
Party ID	.215***	.147***	.125***	.214***
	(.033)	(.035)	(.035)	(.034)
Income	-.005	.002	.016	.002
	(.021)	(.021)	(.021)	(.022)
Female	-.094	-.091	-.083	-.113
	(.092)	(.090)	(.089)	(.092)
Black	.299	.262	.282	.321*
	(.189)	(.188)	(.186)	(.191)
Hispanic	.076	.185	.186	.088
	(.133)	(.132)	(.130)	(.135)
Church Attend	.132***	.084**	.052	.120***
	(.034)	(.035)	(.035)	(.035)
Literalism	.308***	.154	.109	.299***
	(.095)	(.098)	(.097)	(.096)
Evangelical	.378***	.294**	.255**	.393***
	(.130)	(.129)	(.128)	(.131)
Catholic	-.176	-.184	-.175	-.164
	(.124)	(.122)	(.120)	(.125)
Religious ID	--	2.099***	2.343***	.132
	--	(.399)	(.367)	(.124)
R Squared	.301	.341	.361	.307
Adjusted R2	.286	.325	.345	.290
N	423	415	414	416

Table 2.9 continued

	Leighley Ved	Chong Rogers	Huddy Khatib
Constant	1.307*** (.324)	1.445*** (.307)	1.631*** (.294)
Party ID	.183*** (.035)	.184*** (.035)	.172*** (.034)
Income	-.001 (.022)	.008 (.022)	-.002 (.021)
Female	-.151 (.092)	-.072 (.092)	-.123 (.090)
Black	.267 (.189)	.302 (.189)	.167 (.187)
Hispanic	.105 (.132)	.105 (.133)	.071 (.130)
Church Attend	.109*** (.035)	.099*** (.035)	.049 (.038)
Literalism	.264*** (.096)	.210** (.098)	.155 (.100)
Evangelical	.377*** (.128)	.363*** (.131)	.372*** (.128)
Catholic	-.145 (.123)	-.158 (.124)	-.138 (.122)
Religious ID	.884*** (.324)	1.149*** (.296)	1.273*** (.270)
R Squared	.313	.330	.338
Adjusted R2	.296	.313	.321
N	420	409	419

* p < 0.10; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01

In the Dawson-style model, religious identity is again not statistically significant. All of the other religious covariates remain similar to the base model with no religious identity measure. Uniquely, as noted above, the African American measure becomes statistically significant in the Dawson model. The Leighley and Vedlitz and the Chong and Rogers style models are nearly identical to one another. All religious effects remain unchanged from the base model even though religious identity is significant in both. Chong and Rogers has a slightly larger religious identity effect (1.149) compared to Leighley and Vedlitz (.884), but the models are on the whole quite similar.

The Huddy and Khatib model is somewhat of an outlier in this set of models. While the statistically significant, positive effect for evangelical remains, both church attendance and biblical literalism drop from significance, as religious identification emerges as a significant, positive predictor.

Summary

This chapter accomplishes a number of tasks. First, it presents the ways in which religion has been conceptualized in research, and discusses how scholarship has adjusted to changes in American religiosity by creating the three Bs of belonging, believing, and behaving. Next, it discusses some challenges and possible limitations for the three Bs. It then develops a conceptualization of religion as a social identity, which offers a new dimension to how religion is viewed in most political research on religion. As such, it opens an additional way to understand how religion can structure political attitudes and affect political behaviors.

This chapter draws on social identity theory and related literatures to identify ways in which social identities have been measured in other fields, looking especially at work on race and politics. These measures are then translated to religion, taking care to make as parsimonious a list as possible given the many different components. They are tested and evaluated using a student survey. Analyses of the results indicate that the indices demonstrate internal consistency, and the measures on the whole are positively but not too strongly correlated with the three Bs. This suggests that religious identity is

measuring a distinct dimension that is related to but distinct from belonging, believing, and behaving.

Finally, the measures show predictive power when placed alongside the three Bs in models of policy attitudes that we expect religion to shape. While the religious application of the linked fate (Dawson) measure does not show a statistically significant effect, the other measures of religious identity do. Furthermore, including the new variables can sometimes drop the other religious measures from statistical significance.

Chapter 3: Establishing the Relationship Between Threat and Religious Identity

Overview

Previous research on social identities suggests that a perceived threat toward one's group can influence an individual's attitudes and behavior (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Huddy et al. 2002; Huddy 2003; Huddy et al. 2007). These findings are buttressed by a broader literature on threat that examines how foreign and domestic policy attitudes react to war, geopolitical unrest, and terrorism (Jentelson 1992; Hermann, Tetlock, and Visser 1999; Huddy et al. 2005). Numerous findings suggest direct links between threat and support for more extreme, protectionist, retaliatory and sometimes putative action. Here, these insights are drawn into this dissertation's broader conversation on the political effects of religion as a social identity.

Specifically, this chapter looks at how threat shapes the role of religious identity in structuring political attitudes. It does so through two studies. The first utilizes an experiment embedded within an opinion survey that tests whether or not Christians with differing levels of religious identity react differently to policies on prayers at public high school graduations when additional information is introduced that could be viewed as threatening to Christians' relative social status. Respondents are asked about support for public prayers offered by both Christian and Muslim students. The threat treatment incites stronger support for such prayer, and for both Christians and Muslims. Differences in mean responses do not surpasses conventional thresholds of significance, which is

understandable for a small sample size, but the results nonetheless suggest a relationship between threat and religious identity. This also raises important questions about the extent to which religious reaction to threat is protectionist or retaliatory in nature vis-à-vis religious outgroups.

The second study uses a student survey to test attitudes toward a similar policy. In this study, the issue is not the religion of the person offering the prayer, but rather general support for prayer at public school events. In a model of attitudes, I find that religious identity and threat both have a statistically significant and positive effect on policy support. I also find a significant interaction between threat and religious identity. The interaction shows threat to have a greater positive effect among those with a weaker religious identity than among those with a stronger one. This aligns with the findings discussed in Chapter 4; while threat has a positive effect for both weak and strong identifiers, its moderating effect is felt the strongest among the weak identifiers. This suggests that threat may increase the salience of their religious identity in structuring policy attitudes. While religious identity is already politically relevant for those with a strong identity, threat can be viewed as a politicizing force for those with a weak identity that may otherwise have little political relevance.

Why Should Threat Matter to Religious Identity?

Social identity and threat are closely related concepts. When individuals develop a social identity, they self-categorize themselves as part of a larger group with which they share certain characteristics. Moreover, this identification with the group informs their

personal identity, forming a social identity. Social identities allow individuals to utilize in-group versus out-group distinctions to locate and contextualize themselves in relation to broader society (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel 1981). This is important because threat in a political context is typically experienced via reference groups.

For example, a public school teacher might experience a sense of threat from a policy proposal to reduce health or retirement benefits for teachers, or to privatize a public teacher retirement system. This threat is experienced not as a *personal* threat made against a specific teacher, but a threat to public school teachers *as a group*. Identification with the group enables the individual to experience the threat. The race literature also provides examples. Dawson (1994) finds that African Americans experience threat via identification with their racial group. A policy that is viewed as a threat to African Americans generally can be experienced as threat by an individual precisely because of the individual's racial identity. In his study of evangelicals, Smith (1998) argues that "the human drives for meaning and belonging are satisfied primarily by locating human selves within social groups that sustain distinctive, morally orienting collective identities" (90). A social identity provides the necessary medium through which an individual can understand a policy or political agenda as threatening to oneself.

It thus makes sense that several facets of the social identity measures that were translated to religion in Chapter 2 include sensitivity to threat among their constituent elements. For example, the concept of polar power measures a sense of relative disadvantage for one's own group in relation to the influence of other out-groups. Individual vs. system blame similarly gages the extent to which individuals believe their station in life to be self-determined versus governed by circumstances that affect their

group and are therefore beyond their control. These measures can function like barometers of threat, since they directly connect the social identity of group members to an experience of exogenous forces of disadvantage directed toward the group. Chong and Rogers (2005) include among their measures of social identity the experience of discrimination toward one's group. Such measures, each drawn from related but distinct approaches to social identity as a political determinant, demonstrate the close relationship between perceived threat and social identity.

The experience of threat is also a longstanding part of religious experience. World history is peppered with examples of threat and persecution toward religious groups of all kinds across all times and places. Religious texts in the Abrahamic traditions are replete with stories of religious groups being enslaved, religious wars, religious persecution, and divine protection from external threats to religious observance and even one's life. One of the most famous sermons of Jesus in the Christian scriptures, the Sermon on the Mount, includes:

> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
>
> Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.[1] (Matthew 5:9-12)

[1] *New Revised Standard Version*; see also Luke 6:22-23.

Political threats toward religious groups played a major role in framing the American experiment, as communities of religious dissenters sought out a political context in which they could practice their common faith. This also led Roger Williams to found Rhode Island as "a lively experiment" in religious freedom for dissenters like him who were no longer welcome in the colonial experiments of others. Despite the innovation of the First Amendment, religious freedom was still hard to come by for many religious minorities. Threats against Mormons eventually drove the group westward in a mass migration. Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics, and atheists brought numerous lawsuits—many of which are now considered landmark cases on the free exercise and establishment of religion—in order to secure constitutional rights in the public schools and the community.

Roman Catholics experienced sometimes fierce persecution for much of American history. When Al Smith ran as the Democratic nominee for president in 1932, stories like this were not uncommon:

> The school board of Daytona Beach, Fla., sent a note home with every student. It read simply: "We must prevent the election of Alfred E. Smith to the Presidency. If he is elected President, you will not be allowed to have or read a Bible." Fliers informed voters that if Smith took the White House, all Protestant marriages would be annulled, their offspring rendered illegitimate on the spot.[2] (Slayton 2011)

[2] Slayton, Robert A. 2011. "When a Catholic Terrified the Heartland." *The New York Times*, December 11, 2011. See also Slayton, Robert. 2007. *Empire Statesmen: The Rise and Redemption of Al Smith*. New York: Free Press.

In view of Smith's landslide defeat, John F. Kennedy took proactive measures to ensure that the second Catholic nominated by a major party for the presidency would not experience a similar fate. In a now-famous speech to a meeting of Protestant ministers in Houston, Texas, Kennedy declared, "I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for president, who happens also to be a Catholic. I do not speak for my church on public matters, and the church does not speak for me."[3] Similarly, Mitt Romney made a speech during the 2008 presidential campaign to proactively address his Mormon religion.

Chapter 2 looked briefly at (sociologist Christian) Smith's (1998) argument that a constant tension between evangelical Protestantism's religious subculture and the broader world fuels its vitality. That discussion focused on how Smith's subcultural identity theory coheres with a conceptualization of religion as a social identity. Here, it is important to also note the role of threat, writing that "conflict vis-à-vis outsiders constitutes a crucial element of what we might call the 'cultural DNA' of American evangelicalism" (121). Writes Smith, "One consistent theme we heard from the evangelicals we interviewed was their perception of a double-standard in American public discourse that discriminates against Christians" (140). He further explains, "More than a few evangelicals are concerned by what they believe are increasingly powerful, organized groups in America with clearly anti-Christian agendas" (142). Drawing on Marsden (1980), Smith also notes that dynamics of the evangelical subcultural identity

[3] Full text is available online at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, www.jfklibrary.org.

"find similar expression in the experience of ethnic minorities in the context of less-than-hospitable majorities" (142).

Hunter (1991) identifies a strong sense of threat on both sides of the "culture wars," where fundamentally opposing moral worldviews clash over the future of American society. Hunter's depiction of cultural warfare between moral traditionalists and progressives shows elite discourse to propel the experience of threat among individuals on both sides of the battlefield. This is not unlike analyses of the 2004 presidential election, which found the presence of state ballot initiatives to ban gay marriage to increase mobilization among evangelicals and other moral traditionalists in order to protect traditional marriage from the progressive threat (Campbell and Monson 2008; also Green 2007).

Previous research has shown threat in politics to elicit strong reactions, more extreme policy preferences, and greater intolerance for out-groups (Sullivan, Pierson, and Marcus 1982; Marcus et al. 1995; Gibson 1998; Huddy et al. 2005). The swift passage of the USA PATRIOT Act, about six weeks after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks provides a good example. Normative arguments over the law notwithstanding, its swift passage with votes of 357-66 in the House and 98-1 in the Senate, just days after the massive legislation was introduced, demonstrate how the sense of threat can motivate strong and sudden policy action.[4] Researchers have also found threat to increase support for retaliatory action like decisions to go to war (Jentelson 1992; Hermann, Tetlock, and

[4] This is especially noteworthy considering that many of the representatives and senators who voted for the bill have longstanding voting records that contradict some of the bill's sweeping measures.

Visser 1999). Huddy et al. (2005) found threat to increase support for the Bush Administration's anti-terrorism policies both domestically and abroad.

Threat has also been found to increase support for protectionist policies that would seemingly secure the advantage of one's group relative to others. Examples might include white opposition to bilingual education programs, forced busing, or affirmative action (Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears 1988; Huddy and Sears 1995). Similarly, ample research suggests that whites in diverse social settings are more likely to prefer candidates that support racially protectionist policies, the so-called "contact hypothesis" (Matthews and Prothro 1963; Blalock 1967; Giles and Buckner 1993; Giles and Hertz 1994; Glaser 1994; 2003; but cf. Siegelman and Welch 1993; Kinder and Mendelberg 1995). Sometimes, threat elicits retaliatory and protectionist impulses at the same time. For example, proponents of capital punishment often cite a perceived deterrent effect.

Despite these findings, I am aware of only a few studies that have extended this research to religion. Campbell (2006) draws a religious analogy to the racial contact hypothesis. In the context of the 1960 presidential election, Converse (1966) and Gilbert (1993) find that Protestants who live in areas with higher concentrations of Catholics were more likely to vote for Nixon. Noting that politics today no longer demonstrates a significant Protestant-Catholic divide as in the past, Campbell instead suggests the presence of an evangelical-secular divide, now well established in research (Hunter 1991; 1994; Smith 1998; Layman 2001). Campbell finds evidence for this evangelical contact hypothesis. Evangelicals who live in areas with a higher concentration of seculars, i.e., those who claim no religious affiliation, were more likely to vote for the Republican ticket in 1996 and 2000.

This review of relevant literature highlights some important points. Ample evidence shows that threat is a meaningful determinant in politics. Research also suggests that social identity is a meaningful medium through which an individual may experience threat. Both previous research and the long historical relationship between religion and threat suggest that religion is a social category through which individuals may experience threat. The following two studies in this chapter explore this dynamic further using individual-level data with measures of religious identity and threat.

Study 1: Response to Threat in an Experimental Setting

In the first study, an experiment embedded within an opinion survey investigates two questions. Does the perception of threat against one's religious group impact an individual's policy attitudes? If so, does that effect differ based on the strength of the individual's religious identity? To answer these questions, an experiment was conducted via a traditional telephone survey of registered voters in Tarrant County, Texas. The experiment includes 230 respondents who self-identify as Christians.[5] These respondents were randomly assigned to control and treatment groups of 115 per group.

Respondents were asked three questions. These include a demographic measure of religious identity similar to the Dawson (linked fate) measure that was discussed in

[5] Respondents were asked "What is your present religion, if any?" Response options included Christian, something else, or nothing in particular. Those who responded anything other than Christian were dropped from the experiment.

Chapter 2.[6] Unfortunately, that measure did not perform as well as others in models, but it does offer the added benefit of being a well-established approach to measuring group consciousness in other literatures. Table 3.1 displays the responses to the linked fate question. A total of 16 respondents did not answer this question, slightly reducing the number of cases.[7]

Table 3.1 Linked Fate Responses by Treatment Group

	Control	Treatment	Total
A lot	44%	41%	42%
Some	34%	28%	31%
Not much	22%	31%	27%
N	108	106	214

Respondents were also asked two policy questions about prayer at public high school graduations. This particular policy was a matter of public debate in Texas. In 2011, a federal district judge issued a controversial ruling that prohibited students from reciting a prayer at their high school graduation.[8] Soon thereafter, a federal appeals court overruled the district judge. The court case was settled the following year, but politicians

[6] Question wording for this item: "Do you think that what happens generally to Christians in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life? Will that affect you a lot, some, or not at all?"

[7] For the purposes of analysis, a "strong" religious identity is defined as believing that what happens generally to Christians in this country will have "a lot" to do with what happens in one's own life. As discussed in Chapter 2, a social identity forms when an individual's identification with the group is strong enough to inform their own personal identity. This suggests a conceptual distinction between those who believe their group to have "a lot" and only "some" effect on their life. Participants who respond "some" or "not much" to the linked fate question are defined as having a "weak" religious identity.

[8] See Guillermo Contreras, "Appeals panel overturns Medina Valley graduation prayer ban," *San Antonio Express-News*, June 4, 2011.

and interest groups continued to stoke public interest in the matter for some time. Religion in public schools is also an important issue in the so-called culture wars (Hunter 1991) and the source of numerous court battles (Witte and Nichols 2016). Respondents were asked:

> Recently, a public school district refused to let a Christian student recite an opening prayer over the loudspeaker at her high school graduation. Do you agree, disagree, or neither agree nor disagree with the school's decision? Would that be strongly agree/disagree or somewhat agree/disagree?

Respondents were also asked the same question but the religion of the student was changed from Christian to Muslim.[9] The order of these two questions was randomized, so that about half of the respondents would receive the Christian question first and the other would receive the Muslim one first. The control group received these questions with no additional framing information. Table 3.2 displays their responses.

Table 3.2 Control Group Responses

"Recently, a public school district refused to let a Christian student recite an opening prayer over the loudspeaker at her high school graduation. Do you…?"

	Strong Identity	Weak Identity	Total
Strong Agree (1)	9%	10%	10%
Some Agree (2)	2%	14%	9%
Neither (3)	16%	21%	19%
Some Disagree (4)	16%	12%	14%
Strong Disagree (5)	57%	43%	49%
Mean (std. dev.)	*4.09 (1.29)*	*3.64 (1.42)*	*3.84 (1.37)*
N	*44*	*58*	*102*

[9] Muslim prayer was briefly discussed in the judge's opinion, and arguments in support of the district position reference that students of any religion may offer prayer.

(Figure 3.2 continued)

"Recently, a public school district refused to let a Muslim student recite an opening prayer over the loudspeaker at her high school graduation. Do you…?"

	Strong Identity	Weak Identity	Total
Strong Agree (1)	24%	25%	24%
Some Agree (2)	10%	4%	7%
Neither (3)	12%	25%	19%
Some Disagree (4)	24%	13%	18%
Strong Disagree (5)	31%	33%	32%
Mean (std. dev.)	*3.29 (1.58)*	*3.04 (1.59)*	*3.16 (1.59)*
N	*42*	*48*	*90*

In the control group, respondents were more supportive of the Christian prayer than the Muslim one. Viewed as a five-point Likert, with 1 representing strong agreement and 5 representing strong disagreement with the prayer-restrictive policy, respondents register a mean response of 3.84 on the Christian question compared to 3.16 on the Muslim one (.68 difference). Strong identifiers register a higher mean response to both questions compared to weak identifiers, 4.09 to 3.64 for the Christian question, and 3.29 to 3.04 for the Muslim question. The difference in means between strong and weak identifiers is modestly greater on the Christian question (.45 difference) than on the Muslim one (.25 difference).

The treatment group received an issue frame prior to being read these questions. The issue frame was a factual statement that could be perceived as threatening to Christians' relative status in society. The statement reads:

> A national study earlier this year found that fewer Americans are Christians than ever before. About one-quarter of Americans now belong to a religion other than Christianity or claim no religion at all. The largest decline in Christianity is found

among young adults. One-third of adults in America under the age of 30 are no longer Christian.[10]

The use of an issue frame to introduce threat to the treatment group follows framing effects research like Sniderman et al. (1991), which found higher support for AIDS-related nondiscrimination policies that were framed as matters of civil rights but less support when they were framed as matters of public health. Other work on framing effects has found that the same policy can elicit different opinions depending on the way in which it is framed (e.g., Tversky and Kahneman 1981, 1987; Quattrone and Tversky 1988). In this experiment, the manipulation of the frame is fairly minimal. The verbiage of the policy is not manipulated; rather, one group receives additional framing information that could prime a sense of threat toward Christians while the other group does not.

Table 3.3 displays the treatment group's results. Respondents in this group were also more supportive of the Christian prayer (4.07) than the Muslim one (3.35), with a difference of .72 in mean responses. Strong identifiers again registered a higher mean response to both questions, 4.44 to 3.83 on the Christian question and 3.57 to 3.18 on the Muslim question. As with the control group, the difference in means is slightly stronger for the Christian prayer (.61 difference) than the Muslim one (.39 difference).

[10] The information in this treatment comes from the Pew Research Center's *2014 Religious Landscape Study*.

Table 3.3 Treatment Group Responses

"Recently, a public school district refused to let a Christian student recite an opening prayer over the loudspeaker at her high school graduation. Do you…?"

	Strong Identity	Weak Identity	Total
Strong Agree (1)	7%	4%	5%
Some Agree (2)	5%	11%	8%
Neither (3)	7%	16%	12%
Some Disagree (4)	9%	24%	17%
Strong Disagree (5)	72%	45%	57%
Mean (std. dev.)	*4.44 (1.17)*	*3.83 (1.30)*	*4.07 (1.25)*
N	*43*	*55*	*98*

"Recently, a public school district refused to let a Muslim student recite an opening prayer over the loudspeaker at her high school graduation. Do you…?"

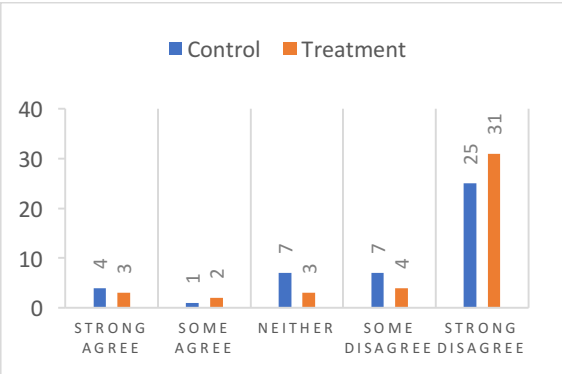
	Strong Identity	Weak Identity	Total
Strong Agree (1)	21%	25%	24%
Some Agree (2)	10%	8%	9%
Neither (3)	7%	15%	12%
Some Disagree (4)	14%	24%	20%
Strong Disagree (5)	48%	27%	36%
Mean (std. dev.)	*3.57 (1.65)*	*3.18 (1.56)*	*3.35 (1.58)*
N	*42*	*59*	*101*

Previous threat research suggests that the treatment group should demonstrate a stronger opposition to prohibiting prayer by a Christian but lower opposition to prohibiting a Muslim's prayer relative to the control group, since conditions of threat have been shown to incite protectionist policy responses, meaning a policy that privileges one's own group relative to others (Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears 1988; Huddy and Sears 1995). In fact, as the following figures indicate, just the opposite occurs here. Mean responses for the treatment group are higher than the control group on both the Christian and Muslim prayer question. This does not evidence a connection between threat and increased support for protectionist policies that would advantage Christians over those

who adhere to other religions. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 compare the responses of control and treatment groups.

Figure 3.1 Responses for Christians with a Strong Religious Identity

"…refused to let a Christian student recite…"



"…refused to let e Muslim student recite…"

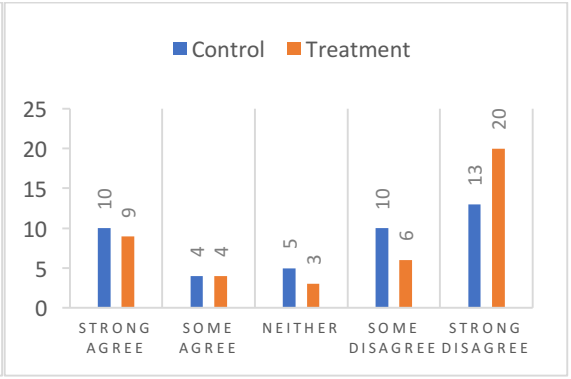
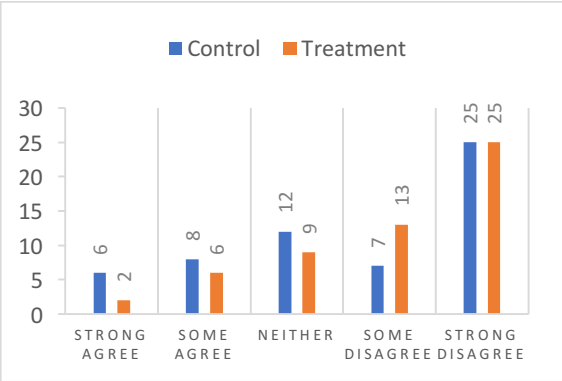
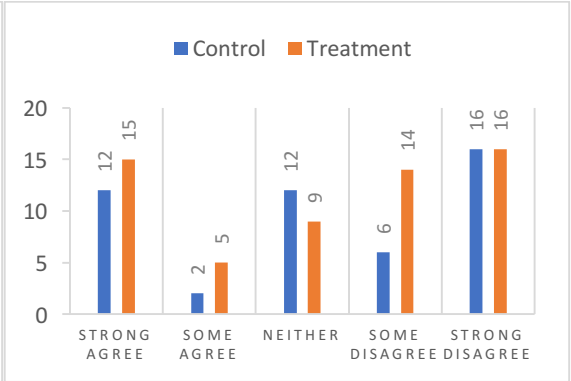


Figure 3.2 Responses for Christians with a Weak Religious Identity

"…refused to let a Christian student recite…"



"…refused to let a Muslim student recite…"



Ample research has also found threat to lead to more extreme policy opinions (e.g., Huddy et al. 2005). Mean responses for the treatment group are higher than the control group on both questions. The difference in means is not beyond conventional levels of statistical significance, which may be due to a small sample size and a fairly mild threat treatment, but the differences in means are nonetheless suggestive. Also

interesting is that reasons for these differences are not the same for strong and weak identifiers. Among strong identifiers, Figure 3.1 shows noticeably more "strong disagree" responses for the treatment group than the control group. However, Figure 3.2 shows that weak identifiers have no difference between control and treatment groups in "strong disagree" responses. Rather, the increase in mean response for weak identifiers came in the more measured "somewhat disagree" response category.

Study 2: Modeling Threat and Religious Identity as an Interaction

The second study uses cross-sectional survey data to test a relationship between threat and religious identity. Individuals can identify with multiple social groups, but the strength of those identities can vary widely. Threat and social identity are closely related concepts, since social identities enable individuals to perceive a threat in the political environment. I hypothesized in Chapter 1 that threat has a moderating effect on religious identity, elevating that identity's salience and thereby increasing its political relevance to an individual. Placed alongside other well-established politically relevant dimensions of religion—the three Bs—this conceptualization of religious identity and threat could be specified in a model as:

$$Y = \beta_1 Z + \beta_2(\text{belonging}) + \beta_3(\text{believing}) + \beta_4(\text{behaving}) + \beta_5(\text{identity}) + \beta_6(\text{threat}) + \beta_7(\text{identity*threat}) + u$$

where Z represents other relevant variables and controls, and the interaction term (identity*threat) accounts for the moderating effect of threat on identity.

This study uses data from the survey of undergraduate students at the University of Texas at Austin that was presented in Chapter 2. It was conducted online via SurveyGizmo and the Blackboard course management system and includes several questions that could be used to measure religious identity. Chapter 2 presented six approaches to measure religious identity and tested them in two models of policy opinions. Many performed similarly and demonstrated significant effects alongside the three Bs and other variables known to structure policy attitudes. In these models, the measure based on Harris-Lacewell and Junn (2007) resulted in the highest adjusted R-squared. Here, this measure is interacted with threat to assess whether threat has a moderating effect on religious identity.

Similar to the threat experiment in Study 1, the dependent variable is one's policy position on prayer at public school events. Specifically, this survey question asks respondents their level of support or opposition to a policy that allows "prayer before high school programs, such as football games and graduations." This model is for self-identified Christian respondents because only Christians were able to complete some of the questions that comprise the measure of religious group identity, and the Christian sample is the only one large enough to test models. Christians generally support the policy but variation exists, with 4% strongly opposing the policy, 10% registering somewhat opposition, 27% holding an opinion in the middle, 33% supporting it somewhat, and 26% strongly supporting the policy.[11]

[11] Viewed as a five-point Likert, with 1 strongly opposing and 5 strongly supporting the policy, the mean response for Christians is 3.66, with a standard deviation of 1.10.

Table 3.4 The Role of Threat and Religious Identity in Structuring Attitudes Toward Prayer at Public School Events (OLS)

Constant	0.823** (.342)
Party ID	.123*** (.035)
Income	.016 (.021)
Female	-.099 (.089)
Black	.259 (.186)
Hispanic	-.183 (.129)
Church Attend	.051 (.035)
Literalism	.122 (.097)
Evangelical	.269** (.127)
Catholic	-.176 (.120)
Religious ID	3.163*** (.529)
Threat	.929** (.445)
Religious ID X Threat	-1.624** (.699)
R Square	.369
Adjusted R2	.351
N	414

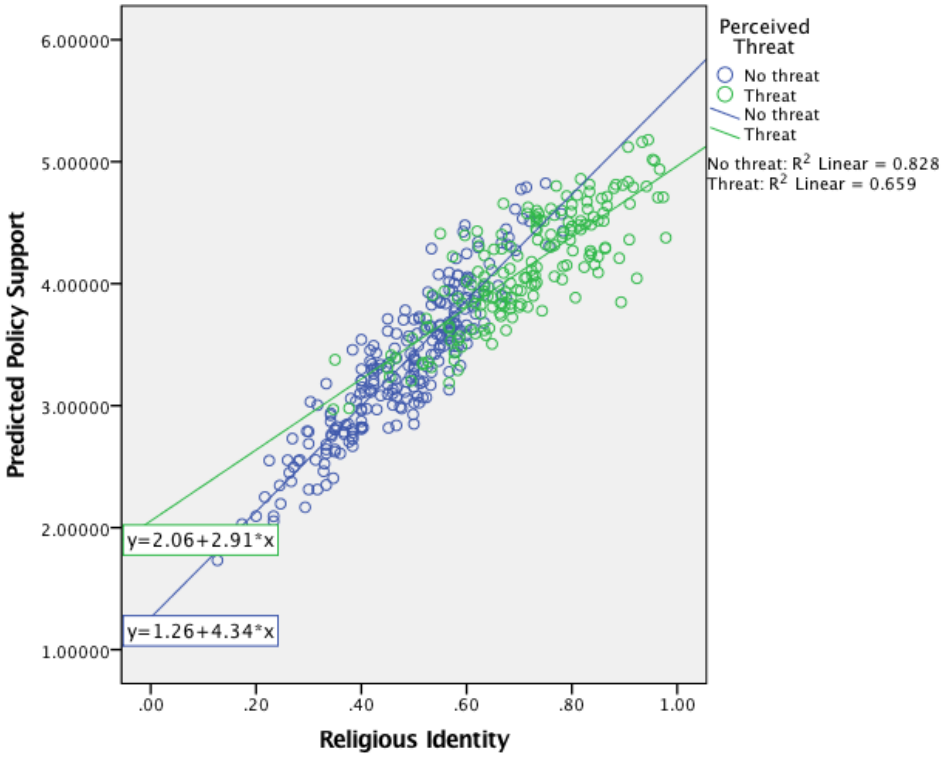
* p < 0.10; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01

Table 3.4 displays regression results. As hypothesized, both religious identity and threat have a significant and positive effect on opinion. The interaction between threat and religious identity is also significant, which shows that a relationship between the two does exist. The negative coefficient means that, even though threat and religious identity both have independent positive effects, threat's moderating effect on religious identity is higher for those with weaker religious identities and decreases as religious identity increases.

Of the other traditional religious explanatory variables, neither church attendance nor Biblical literalism has a significant effect on the policy position. This generally accords with the findings in Chapter 2, which show that including religious group identity can cause some of the three Bs to lose statistical significance when included together in a model, although this depends on the measure of religious group identity used. Statistically significant effects also exist for evangelicals and Republicans, and both are more likely to support the policy.

Figure 3.3 presents a scatter plot to visually depict the interaction between threat and religious identity on predicted policy support when all other independent variables are held at their means.

Figure 3.3 How Threat and Religious Identity Impact Predicted Policy Support for Prayer at Public School Events



The independent effects of religious identity and threat are easy to see. As religious identity becomes stronger, predicted policy support increases. Threat is a dichotomous variable based on responses to the statement "Discrimination against Christian values and beliefs is a problem in this country." Christians who agree are classified as perceiving threat and those who disagree are not. The independent effect of threat is evidenced in that green data points, which represent respondents who perceive threat, tend to cluster higher, which indicates greater policy support. The interaction effect is evidenced in the difference in fit lines for those who perceive threat (green) compared to those who do not (blue). Overall, threat changes the slope of the fit line, evidencing a stronger positive impact on policy support for those who have a weaker religious identity than for those who have a stronger identity.[12]

Summary

This chapter makes several important contributions to the dissertation. Its chief contribution is establishing a relationship between threat and religious identity as predictors of policy opinion. This aligns with research on other social identities, which has shown a relationship between group identity and relevant stimuli in the political environment (such as threat) to have a meaningful effect on attitudes and behavior (e.g., Dawson 1994). This chapter suggests that a similar process exists for religion: not only

[12] This finding is further demonstrated in the scatter plots in Chapter 4, which include a larger number of respondents at the low end of the religious identity scale who perceive threat and more clearly depict the contrasting fit lines as discussed here. The data in Chapter 4 is also more representative, coming from a statewide survey of the general population rather than a student sample.

do threat and religious identity have independent effects, but threat has a moderating effect on religious identity.

These two studies clearly show independent positive effects for threat and religious identity. The data in Study 1 are suggestive that Christians who experience threat hold stronger pro-prayer policy positions than Christians who do not experience threat. The same general relationship appears to be the case for Christians who hold stronger rather than weaker religious identities. The regression in Study 2 shows statistically significant and positive effects for threat and religious identity.

Both studies also show relationships between threat and religious identity. This is most easily seen in the significant interaction effect in Study 2, which shows threat to have a stronger impact on policy opinion for those with weaker religious identities than for those with stronger ones. This suggests that threat may elevate the salience of one's religious identity when structuring certain attitudes. Study 1 also shows differences in how threat affects policy positions, with the increase in mean response for weak identifiers due to upward opinion movement within the middle of the scale, while the increase for strong identifiers is due more to movement toward the high end of the scale.

Finally, these studies do find evidence for threat leading to more extreme policy opinions, but not necessarily for protectionist policies that privilege one religious group at the expense of others. To the contrary, Study 1 finds threat to increase support for public prayers for both Christian and Muslim students. This raises questions about whether threat incites the same kind of protectionist reaction for religion as seen with other social identities. It could be that support for Muslim prayer by Christians might evidence a more general impulse toward religious freedom. Analogies might also be

drawn to work on panethnic identities, where Christians might identify with a broader category like "persons of faith" concerning matters of religious freedom that impact religion generally. This represents an avenue for further research.

This chapter also underscores at the dynamic nature of religion as a social identity, considering the moderating effect of a political stimulus like threat. Unlike static demographic characteristics, the political relevance of religious identity appears to vary according to circumstances in the political environment. Such an idea arguably introduces more questions than it answers, but the findings here suggest a promising area for future research.

Chapter 4: The Impact of Religious Identity and Threat on Attitudes Toward Religion in Public Schools

Introduction

On September 13, 2001, just two days after devastating terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon building, television host Pat Robertson, a prominent voice among Christian conservatives, offered his perspective on what brought about the attacks. His answer took the form of a prayer:

> The Supreme Court has insulted you over and over again, Lord. They've taken your Bible away from the schools. They've forbidden little children to pray. They've taken the knowledge of God as best they can—and the organizations have come into court to take the knowledge of God out of the public square of America.[1]

While other Christian conservatives rejected Robertson's controversial assertion that the terrorist attacks were divine punishment for secularization, his remarks do typify the conviction among many religious conservatives that public schools stand along the front lines of a culture war (Hunter 1991).[2] From the Scopes Trial to the present day, public schools have been a battleground for clashes over evolution and creationism, Bible

[1] *The 700 Club*. 2001. Virginia Beach, VA: Christian Broadcasting Network. Television broadcast. (September 13, 2001)

[2] Fiorina (2004) differs with Hunter, arguing that the so-called culture war is more an elite phenomenon than a popular one, while Hunter views it as more pervasive. There is no scholarly consensus on the extent to which soft attitudes, uncertainty, and ambivalence may disallow broad and deep rifts in the electorate. Ample research nonetheless shows divisions along value-based lines (Wuthnow 1988; Layman and Carmines 1997; Layman 2001; Wolfe and Hunter 2006).

readings, and prayer in the classroom, at graduations, and at football games.[3] For nearly a century, the trajectory of policy has been toward less religion. This historical experience suggests that religious Americans may be especially sensitive to policies pertaining to religion in public schools, which makes this an appropriate domain to study how religious group identity and threat impact policy attitudes.[4]

In this chapter, I use original survey data from a statewide survey of Texans to test the effects of religious group identity and perceived threat against religion on attitudes toward curriculum changes designed to increase the presence of religion in Texas public schools. If, as this dissertation argues, religion is a meaningful social identity, then previous research suggests that social psychological processes like group identity and the perception of threat may play a considerable role in how religion structures policy attitudes.

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[3] Many of these clashes involved high-profile legal battles. In perhaps the most famous of these, *State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes* (1925), a schoolteacher was found guilty of teaching evolution, which was banned by state law for religious reasons. *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) banned mandatory prayer by school officials as a violation of the Establishment Clause. In *Abington School District v. Schempp* and *Murray v. Curlett* (1963), the Supreme Court similarly struck down mandatory Bible readings in the schools. It also held that public prayers were impermissible at graduations (*Lee v. Weisman* 1992) and sporting events (*Santa Fe ISD v. Doe* 2000); although, a federal appeals court remanded a case to a San Antonio, Texas-based district court to uphold student-led graduation prayer, as noted in Chapter 3 (*Schultz v. Medina Valley ISD* 2012).

[4] Religion in public schools is a meaningful issue to most religious groups, including secular Americans. For the Protestant majority, the decline of religion in public schools symbolized their loosening grip on religious and cultural domination, since "religion" typically meant "Protestant." The Catholic experience was mixed. While historically opposed to prayer in school because of its Protestant nature, Catholics tended to support public Christian religiosity per se nearly as much as Protestants (Delfattore 2004). Religious minorities like Jehovah's Witnesses and secular Americans supported—indeed, fought for—separationist policy changes that removed religious content from public schools.

To preview, I find evidence that religious group identity is a politically relevant dimension of religion that produces meaningful differences in policy attitudes when included alongside traditional measures of religion in a model. I also find the perception of threat to have an independent, positive effect on support for religion in schools. In line with findings in Chapter 3, threat also has a moderating effect on religious identity that is more pronounced among weak identifiers than strong ones.

Interestingly, when looking at these effects among decidedly partisan Texans, the direction of this moderating effect reverses for Democrats. Among strong Republicans, threat has a stronger positive effect on policy attitudes for those with weak religious identities than strong ones, in line with findings for the population as a whole. However, the impact of threat among Democrats is felt much more among those with a strong religious identity and is nearly nonexistent among those with a weak one.

Finally, I find preliminary support for a threat effect among the unaffiliated and nonreligious, as well as religious. Some unaffiliated and nonreligious Texans perceive threat against their secular beliefs, which has a statistically significant negative effect on policies that allow religion in public schools. These are important findings because they underscore the importance of religion as a social cleavage, and specifically the causal influence of religious identity and threat on political attitudes.

Theory and Hypotheses

This dissertation's overarching thesis is that religion is a social identity for many Americans. As such, its role in structuring political attitudes should account for the social

psychological processes of an individual's social identification with a religious group. From this perspective, religion provides adherents with more than a particular set of orienting beliefs about life's deepest questions, but also a social group from which self-conception may be derived (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel 1981; Conover 1988; Brewer 2001; Huddy 2001). As explained in Chapter 1, the linkage of self-conception to group processes highlights religion's capacity to forge a distinction between "us" and "them." Robertson's words are telling, "*They've* taken your Bible away from the schools. *They've* forbidden little children to pray." He implicates not only the Supreme Court but also "the organizations" that represent those Americans who hold different religious and social beliefs.[5] The "us" versus "them" distinction created through identification with a religious group also enables an assessment of whether other groups, beliefs, or policies benefit or adversely affect one's group. When they appear to cause or pose disadvantage, they can elicit a sense of threat. The presence and strength of religious group identity and the perception of threat toward one's group can significantly impact the policy attitudes of group members and religion's role in structuring them.

Research shows that religion plays a meaningful role in structuring public opinion (Wilson 2007; Smidt et al. 2009; Fowler et al. 2010; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014). We also know that Americans are generally accepting of public expressions of religion and oppose court rulings such as those against prayer in schools (e.g., Green and Guth 1989). However, most research has focused on attitudes toward policies that remove or

[5] Also note the similarity to philosopher Martin Buber's (1923) conceptualization of an "I-it" relationship, where the other becomes objectified. This is also noted in Martin Luther King Jr.'s Letter from Birmingham Jail.

restrict religion in public schools. In Texas, the pendulum has started to swing the other direction. In 2008, the Texas Legislature and State Board of Education began to enact policies that favor religion, including curriculum changes that introduce Bible electives into public high schools and emphasize the Christian religious beliefs of the American Founders.[6] The state's curricula govern the content of textbooks, tests, accountability metrics, and course offerings and requirements. These changes are notable for two reasons. First, we know less about public opinion on these kinds of policies, which promote rather than restrict religion in public schools. Second, these policies are distinct because they reverse the recent policy trend. To use a boxing analogy, these policies are not "blocks" against blows to religion in public schools, but "counterpunches" that seek to actively promote religion. Given our current knowledge of Americans' attitudes toward public expressions of religion, we might expect general support for these politics, but dimensionality is difficult to infer. Previous research suggests that religious beliefs and affiliation affect both the magnitude and direction of opinion toward religious policies (Jelen and Wilcox 1995), and variation also exists because of differences in policy specifics and issue frames (Jelen 2000).

The great advantage offered by these policies for present research purposes is the ability to study the effect of religious group identity and threat on attitudes toward policies designed to promote religion. Policies that promote religion are qualitatively different from restrictive ones since they invert the historical position of individuals who

[6] See Stutz (2008) and McKinley (2010) for news media accounts of these policies. See also Chancey (2007) for a more detailed account of public school Bible courses like the one approved for Texas public schools.

favor public expressions of religion from the disadvantaged to the advantaged side of policy outcomes. Even though this new position alters the immediate experience of policy outcomes, I believe that the historical experience of disadvantage will continue to affect attitudes toward these policies. This finds theoretical support in the race literature, which notes the formative impact of the historical experience of discrimination on African American policy attitudes (e.g., Voss 1996). This leads to the following hypotheses.

Given the historical trend of removing religion from public schools, I hypothesize that this is a policy domain in which individuals can and do perceive threat against religion, and that the perception of threat leads to higher support for policies that promote religion. This accords with related work on threat and policy attitudes. In their work on anti-terrorism policy attitudes, Huddy and colleagues (2005) find that the perception of threat leads to more extreme policy attitudes. Those who perceived threat were more likely to support aggressive anti-terrorism policies, including restrictive policies against Arabs and Arab-Americans. Research has also shown threat to elicit support for protectionist policies that privilege one's own group over others (Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears 1988; Huddy and Sears 1995). I extend this line of inquiry to religion by testing whether the perception of threat contributes to higher support for promoting religion through policy. I further hypothesize a relationship between threat and religious identity as seen in Chapter 3, where threat's impact is even stronger among those with weak religious identities. Threat can act like a politicizing force for these individuals, which elevates the salience of their religious identity and makes it politically relevant.

I also hazard two additional hypotheses. The first pertains to partisanship. Layman (2001) finds evidence of a growing rift between the Republican and Democratic parties along religious and cultural lines, with the Republican Party becoming increasingly dominated by social conservatives and the Democratic Party by progressives (also Wuthnow 1988; Hunter 1991). This gives cause to consider whether the effects of religious identity and threat emerge similarly across party lines. Partisanship could alter these effects if, for example, the more progressive orientation of the Democratic Party dampens the perception of threat to religion. Alternatively, Campbell (2006) found support for a religious analogy to the racial contact hypothesis, where evangelicals in close proximity to secular Americans exhibited more conservative voting patterns. Might this lead Democrats with highly salient religious identities, or who perceive threat to religion, to demonstrate a similar phenomenon? I hypothesize the latter given similar findings such as Campbell's.

Finally, Texas poses an interesting situation with its relatively religious ethos (Pew Forum 2008) and a State Board of Education that is dominated by religious conservatives. Given this cultural religiosity and the state's recent departure from the separationist trend in education policy, might this engender a sense of religious threat among nonreligious and unaffiliated persons? I hypothesize that it does, and that threat affects policy attitudes concerning religion for both the religious and nonreligious, leading to more extreme and divergent opinions.

Research Design

This chapter utilizes original survey data from a statewide survey of Texans conducted by YouGov on behalf of the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin. From May 14-20, 2010, responses were collected from an online survey of registered Texas voters.[7] The survey produced 800 respondents out of 879 contacts.

These data offer many benefits. First, the survey measures current opinion on actual policies that directly pertain to this dissertation. The field dates for the survey were shortly after the final enactment of these policies by the State Board of Education, giving them ample and recent visibility in state and local news. As noted by Djupe and Olson (2007), religion in public schools garners attention at the national level but controversy typically emerges at the state and local levels, where the specifics of public school curricula and other policies are decided. Also, because this is original data, I was able to include some relevant questions that are not always present in political surveys. Surveys often have inadequate (or even flawed) religious demographic questions. Smidt et al. (2009) offer a good example from the American National Election Studies (ANES), which from 1990 to 1998 conflated some religious affiliations and theological orientations in force-choice questions that did not allow for multiple identifications, (e.g., being both "evangelical" and "moderate to liberal"). Many surveys also lack important religious demographics. The nature of this research requires a specific set of religious

[7] The survey employed a sample matching methodology. A sampling frame was constructed using the 2007 American Community Survey, supplemented with voter registration and turnout data from the November 2006 Current Population Survey and party identification data from the 2007 Pew Religious Life Survey. Respondents from YouGov's pool of panelists were then selected according to this frame using techniques analogous to traditional random digit dialing (Rivers 2007).

demographics, including measures of religious group identity and the perception of threat, which I was able to assess.

The dependent variables in my model are policy preferences toward two Texas public school curricula changes that increase the presence of religion in the classroom. One policy approved the creation of Bible electives in public high schools. The other made changes to the state's social studies curriculum standards that emphasize the Christian religious beliefs of America's Founders (see Appendix for question wording). The dependent variables are scaled using a five-point, semantically balanced ordinal scale from (1) "strongly disapprove" to (5) "strongly approve."[8] On the survey, the questions were asked in a randomized battery of five questions pertaining to different aspects of public school curricula. Bible classes received support from 65% of respondents, including 89% of evangelical Protestants, 62% of non-evangelical Protestants, 63% of Catholics, and 39% of those who do not identify as Christian. Changing social studies standards to emphasize the Christian beliefs of America's Founders received a slightly lower 60% support from all respondents, including 82% among evangelical Protestants, 58% among non-evangelical Protestants, 63% among Catholics, and 36% among non-Christian identifiers.

Policy attitudes are modeled by religious group identity, the perception of threat, and interaction term to assess a moderating effect of threat on religious group identity, traditional measures of religion (the three Bs of religious belonging, believing, and behaving), party identification, and a set of common demographic control variables.

[8] On the survey, the questions were scaled from (1) "strongly approve" to (5) "strongly disapprove." I reversed the scale for purposes of data analysis.

While especially interested in the effects of religious group identity and threat, traditional measures of religion and party identification are also important because of their known effects on policy attitudes and political behavior.

Previous research has measured of group identity in several different ways, but not for religion. Group identity is not synonymous with group membership, which simply connotes shared characteristics with a group, by either affiliation or ascription. Thus, it cannot be operationalized by religious affiliation.[9] Rather, group identity implies a psychological attachment to the group, which entails shared social and cultural values. As discussed in Chapter 2, race and national identity literatures yield several approaches to measuring group identity (Miller et al. 1981; Dawson 1994; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Chong and Rogers 2005; Harris-Lacewell and Junn 2007; Huddy and Khatib 2007). Many of these studies involve measures of the importance with which one holds a particular group membership. For example, Harris-Lacewell and Junn (2007) ask, "How important is being black to your ideas about politics?" Similarly, Huddy and Khatib (2007) ask, "How important is being American to you?" In many ways, these assess the salience of the particular group at issue. Some surveys ask a similar question to assess the salience of religion to an individual, "How important is religion to your life?"[10] Response options range along a semantically balanced four-point scale from "very important" to

[9] Surveys assess religious affiliation is multiple ways. This survey presents an extensive list of religious and denominational groups, along with more general religious categories, and allows respondents to select the one that best describes their affiliation.

[10] Wording on this question varies. For example, since 1980, the ANES has asked: "Do you consider religion to be an important part of your life, or not?" The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life often asks: "How important is religion to your life?" (Pew Forum 2008), which is the question style used on this survey.

"not at all important." This salience measure approximates the concept of religious group identity and has the added benefit of occurring on other surveys, which can enable replication with other data. On this survey, the highest proportion of religious group identity is found among evangelical Protestants, with 88% of evangelical Protestants responding that religion is very important to their life. Forty-four percent of non-evangelical Protestants demonstrate the strongest degree of religious identity, as do 54% of Catholics.

Threat is the sense of fear elicited when an individual perceives that their status, wellbeing, or resources are in jeopardy. Huddy et al. (2005) operationalize threat by gauging the level of concern one feels that another terrorist attack will occur. I use a similar approach, asking whether "hostility toward religion" in public schools is a problem. Response options include: (1) "major problem," (2) "minor problem," and (3) "not a problem." Huddy and colleagues also assessed threat within a specific policy domain, which is appropriate because threat is always perceived in context. Although, I was less comfortable with their "how concerned are you" language, which could be considered leading and potentially results toward more threat. For analytical purposes, I constructed a dichotomous variable where only those who responded "major problem" were considered to perceive threat against religion in public schools. Dichotomizing threat makes sense because it is a strong emotional response and previous research shows that it produces strong political effects at high levels (for example, Herrmann, Tetlock, and Visser 1999). In these data, 51% of respondents sensed threat against religion in public schools, including 73% of evangelicals, 46% of non-evangelicals, and 52% of

Catholics. Another question reverses the problem from hostility toward religion to "too much religion" in public schools. Using the same approach, a threat variable was also constructed to assess its impact on the nonreligious and unaffiliated, of whom 33% expressed that too much religion in schools was a major problem (compared to 13% of the population as a whole).

Traditional measures of religion consist of religious "belonging" (affiliation), "believing" (theological orientation), and "behaving" (religious practice) (Layman 1997; 2001; Green 2007; Olson and Warber 2008). These are well established in the literature but actual measurements can vary. Here, I operationalize belonging as a combination of denominational and categorical religious affiliations, which helps to eliminate small *n* problems by grouping similar affiliations together. I type Protestants as either evangelical or non-evangelical with the aid of an affiliation follow-up question that assesses evangelical identification. Catholics are considered as their own group and non-Christians are the out-group for purposes of regression analysis.[11] I include these in the model as dummy variables. In order to evaluate the final hypothesis, I constructed a variable for nonreligious and unaffiliated consisting of those who self-identify as atheist, agnostic, or spiritual but not religious.[12] These are conceptually distinct groups but also represent the only respondents who self-categorize out of organized religion.

[11] Each of these groups could have been broken down even farther, e.g., African American Protestants, white and non-white Catholics, evangelical and non-evangelical Catholics. However, the ability to do this is limited by both sufficient survey questions and small *n* problems.

[12] Unfortunately, no other response options exist for no affiliation with organized religion. About 6% of respondents selected "other," but these cannot be considered unaffiliated since some may simply affiliate with a label not offered as a response option.

For religious belief, I use a common question about whether the Bible is the Word of God and to be interpreted literally, word-for-word (e.g., Jelen 1989; McDaniel and Ellison 2008). Answers are dichotomized as literalists and non-literalists. Although, this may be a sufficient but suboptimal measure for Catholics, the vast majority of surveys lack more appropriate alternatives (Leal and Patterson 2013). Finally, behaving is often viewed as one's level of religious devotion (Layman 2001). Some researchers construct indices of different types of religious behaviors, such as the frequency of prayer, Bible reading, and church attendance (Kellstedt et al. 1996). However, space constraints often require a more parsimonious approach. For this reason, I rely on the most common measure of religiosity, one's frequency of church attendance (e.g., Rosenstone and Hanson 1993; Verba et al. 1995).

These data contain other important control variables. Party identification has consistently shown strong effects on policy preferences (Campbell et al. 1960).[13] Work on religion and politics has also shown race to have an impact on political preferences (Leal 2007; 2010; McDaniel 2007; Shaw and McDaniel 2007), as well as gender (Kaufmann 2004), and urbanicity (McDaniel 2008). Standard demographic controls for education, income, and age are also included.

Confirming the decision to not consider others among religious non-affiliates, about one quarter of these also consider themselves to be evangelical Christians.

[13] Party identification is a seven-point scale from (1) "strong Democrat" to (7) "strong Republican." Those who respond (4) "independent" are given a follow up question asking whether they "lean" to either party. For analytical purposes, these leaners are grouped according to their party inclination.

With the dependent variable and independent variables thus defined, the full model looks like:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1(\text{party identification}) + \beta_2(\text{education}) + \beta_3(\text{income}) + \beta_4(\text{age}) + \beta_5(\text{female}) + \beta_6(\text{black}) + \beta_7(\text{Hispanic}) + \beta_8(\text{urbanicity}) + \beta_9(\text{church attendance}) + \beta_{10}(\text{literalism}) + \beta_{11}(\text{evangelical}) + \beta_{12}(\text{non-evangelical}) + \beta_{13}(\text{Catholic}) + \beta_{14}(\text{religious identity}) + \beta_{15}(\text{threat}) + \beta_{15}(\text{religious ID*threat}) + u$$

I use an ordinary least squares (OLS) estimator given that the dependent variable is scaled, assumptions about independence are satisfied, and the OLS estimator has proven robust for models of policy attitudes. To test the party and unaffiliated hypotheses, I alter the model slightly. For the partisanship hypothesis, party identification is omitted. For the non-religious and unaffiliated hypotheses, other religious variables are omitted.

The Effects of Religious Identity and Threat

Table 4.1 presents regression results for the model of attitudes toward the policy changes in school curricula. Party identification demonstrates statistically significant effects on policy opinion, with Republicans more likely than Democrats to support religious content in public schools. Higher education levels also lead to decreased support for these policies. This holds for both the creation of high school Bible classes and revised curriculum standards to emphasize the Christian beliefs of America's Founders.

Table 4.1 Models of Attitudes toward Curriculum Changes (OLS)

	Bible Class	Christian History
Constant	1.096***	.941***
	(.264)	(.282)
Party ID	.162***	.221***
	(.022)	(.023)
Education	-.082***	-.074**
	(.032)	(.034)
Income	.002	-.006
	(.013)	(.014)
Age	-.001	-.002
	(.003)	(.003)
Female	.028	-.122
	(.082)	(.088)
Black	.229	.051
	(.147)	(.156)
Hispanic	.107	.203
	(.123)	(.131)
Urbanicity	.028	-.101
	(.094)	(.101)
Church Attendance	-.005	-.030
	(.031)	(.033)
Literalism	.253**	.118
	(.109)	(.117)
Evang. Protestant	.368**	.323**
	(.147)	(.158)
Non-evang. Prot.	.221	.214
	(.137)	(.147)
Catholic	.109	.206
	(.148)	(.158)
Religious Identity	.535***	.541***
	(.066)	(.071)
Threat	1.486***	1.657***
	(.382)	(.410)
Threat*Religious ID	-.260**	-.262**
	(.107)	(.115)
Adjusted R2	.456	.465
N	722	717

* p < 0.10; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01

Turning to the religious variables, two of the three Bs show statistically significant effects. Religious behaving, operationalized here as frequency of church attendance, does not have a statistically significant impact on opinion toward these

policies. Believing, which is operationalized as belief in the literal interpretation of the Bible as the Word of God, has a positive impact on policy opinion for Bible classes but is not a statistically significant predictor for revisions to the history curriculum. Looking at religious belonging, no statistically significant effects exist for Catholics or non-evangelical Protestants; however, an evangelical Protestant affiliation does lead to higher support for both policies.

Religious identity and threat both have statistically significant, positive effects on opinion. A statistically significant interaction between these terms also exists. The negative interaction coefficient shows that threat's moderating effect on religious identity is felt strongest among those with a weaker religious identity and lessens in severity as religious identity increases, which is in line with findings in Chapter 3. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 visually demonstrate threat's moderating effect on religious identity in the form of scatter plots of predicted policy support. The green data points represent the policy positions of respondents who express a sense of threat. Those who do not perceive threat are represented by blue. The x-axis indicates religious identity, from low (1) to high (4).

Looking at the Bible class policy, support increases as religious identity grows stronger. Across the board, the green (threat) data points tend to cluster higher than the blue (non-threat) ones, indicating higher predicted policy support when all other factors are held at their means. This is also seen in a higher fit line along the y-axis (predicted policy support) for threat than for non-threat. The distance between these fit lines shows threat's moderating effect on religious identity. For those with the weakest religious identity (1), predicted policy support for those who perceive threat is 3.23 compared with

Figure 4.1 How Threat and Religious Identity Impact Predicted Policy Support for Bible Classes in Texas Public High Schools

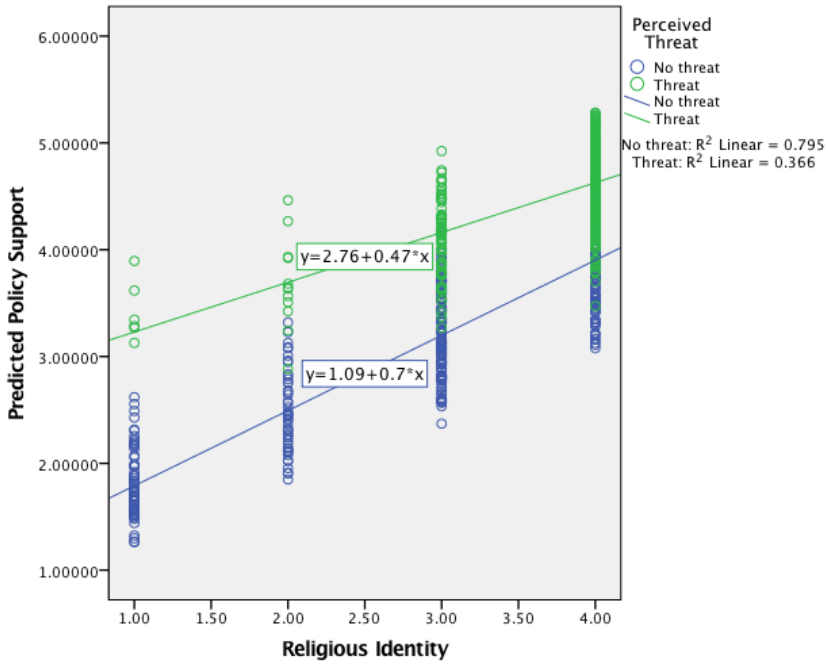
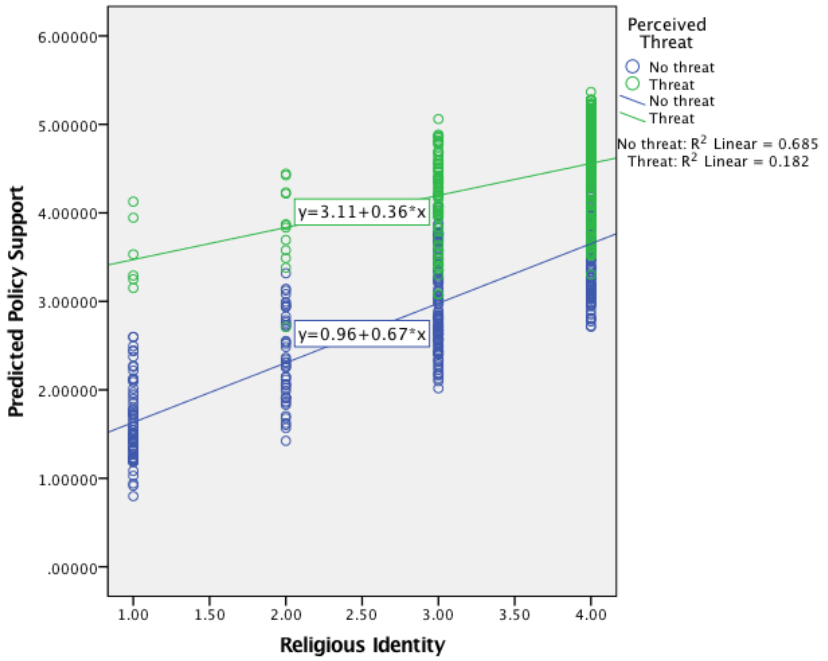


Figure 4.2 How Threat and Religious Identity Impact Predicted Policy Support for Teaching the Christian Beliefs of America's Founders



1.79 for those who do not, for a difference of 1.44 points, or an 80% increase in support. For those with the highest religious identity (4), predicted policy support climbs to 4.64 for those who perceive threat compared to 3.76 for those who do not, for a difference of .88, or a 23% increase in support.

This relationship becomes even more pronounced when looking at policy support for emphasizing the Christian beliefs of America's Founders in curriculum standards. The difference between predicted policy support for those who perceive threat and those who do not among respondents with the weakest religious identity is 1.84 (3.47 compared to 1.63), showing threat to increase policy support among weak religious identifiers by 113%. The difference lessens to .91 (4.55 compared to 3.64) among those with the strongest religious identity, showing threat to increase support by a far more modest 25%. Again, the impact of threat is clearly seen to be stronger among those with weak rather than strong religious identities.

Threat's Effect Among Strong Partisans

Research has shown that American parties have grown increasingly polarized along religious and cultural lines (Wuthnow 1988; Layman 2001). Might this also lead to partisan differences in how religious identity and threat function? I previously suggested two possible scenarios. Because of the Democratic Party's more progressive outlook and less religious voting coalition, religious identity and threat could grow causally quiescent among Democratic partisans. Alternatively, in a fashion similar to the contact hypothesis demonstrated by Campbell (2006) and the race literature (Matthews and Prothro 1963;

Blalock 1967; Giles and Buckner 1993; Giles and Hertz 1994; Glaser 1994; 2003), this could instead amplify the effects of threat and religious identity among Democrats. The following data suggest the latter.

Table 4.2 presents regression results for models of both policies among self-identified strong Democrats and strong Republicans. When the models were fitted for all Democrats and all Republicans, no statistically significant results emerged for threat and religious identity. However, statistically significant and notable results emerge in models of attitudes for strong partisans. This may be due to a soft middle of independent-leaners and weak partisans obscuring the differences between hard partisans. Looking first at strong Republicans, these respondents demonstrate similar behavior to the population as a whole. Measures of religious belonging are even more robust among strong Republicans, with not only evangelical Protestant but also non-evangelical and Catholic affiliations leading to greater support for Bible classes. This is particularly notable among Catholics, since a sizeable number of Catholics do not necessarily agree with the church's conservative teachings on certain social issues that are closely in line with the Republican Party, like opposition to gay marriage and abortion (Lipka 2015). This positive effect may reflect a particular subset of Catholics whose strong adherence to church social positions fosters a strong identification with the Republican Party and moral traditionalist policies. Such an interpretation coheres with Leal and Patterson's (2013) finding that theological and racial diversity within American Catholicism also manifest in differences in political issue positions.

Table 4.2 Models of Attitudes toward Curriculum Changes Among Strong Democrats and Strong Republicans

	Strong D Bible	Strong D History	Strong R Bible	Strong R History
Constant	.376 (.607)	.613 (.642)	2.337*** (.590)	1.881*** (.632)
Education	-.153 (.094)	-.151 (.098)	-.030 (.049)	-.012 (.053)
Income	.041 (.037)	.022 (.040)	.000 (.024)	.004 (.026)
Age	.006 (.007)	.012 (.008)	.000 (.005)	-.003 (.005)
Female	.259 (.221)	.008 (.234)	-.031 (.132)	-.124 (.143)
Black	.355 (.264)	-.054 (.279)	-.099 (.849)	-.252 (.908)
Hispanic	.227 (.321)	.007 (.336)	-.106 (.226)	-.024 (.242)
Urbanicity	.120 (.226)	.031 (.239)	-.021 (.160)	-.213 (.173)
Church Attendance	.024 (.081)	.011 (.085)	-.028 (.049)	.021 (.053)
Literalism	.172 (.323)	.539 (.336)	.245 (.160)	-.103 (.171)
Evang. Protestant	.703* (.392)	1.108*** (.419)	.787*** (.247)	.111 (.265)
Non-evang. Prot.	.655* (.356)	.752** (.380)	.441* (.251)	.115 (.268)
Catholic	.095 (.398)	.196 (.420)	.610** (.272)	.226 (.293)
Religious Identity	.415*** (.152)	.232 (.162)	.418*** (.146)	.734*** (.156)
Threat	-2.489* (.427)	-1.163 (1.547)	1.557** (.721)	2.127*** (.771)
Threat*Religious ID	0.932** (.390)	.549 (.418)	-.362* (.198)	-.509** (.211)
Adjusted R2	.486	.432	.235	.205
N	137	137	175	171

* p < 0.10; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01

The religious belonging variables produce no significant results for the policy regarding the Founder's religious beliefs. The religious measures of Biblical literalism and church attendance demonstrate no significant results for either question among strong Republicans.

Religious identity and threat for Republicans operate similarly to the previously discussed models. The variables for religious identity and threat are both statistically significant and positive, and a statistically significant interaction also exists. Again, the negative coefficient of this interaction shows threat to have a stronger positive effect on policy opinion among those with a weak religious identity than among those with a positive one. Figure 4.3 shows the scatter plot of predicted policy support among strong Republicans for Bible classes. Among weak religious identifiers, threat perception increases policy support from 2.61 to 3.77, an increase of 44%. The impact of threat diminishes to nearly the point of nonexistence among those with a strong religious identity, shifting opinion from 4.51 to 4.73, for a modest 5% increase in policy support. Figure 4.4 depicts a very similar story for teaching the Founder's Christian beliefs.

Figure 4.3 How Threat and Religious Identity Impact Predicted Policy Support for Bible Classes in Texas Public High Schools <u>Among Strong Republicans</u>

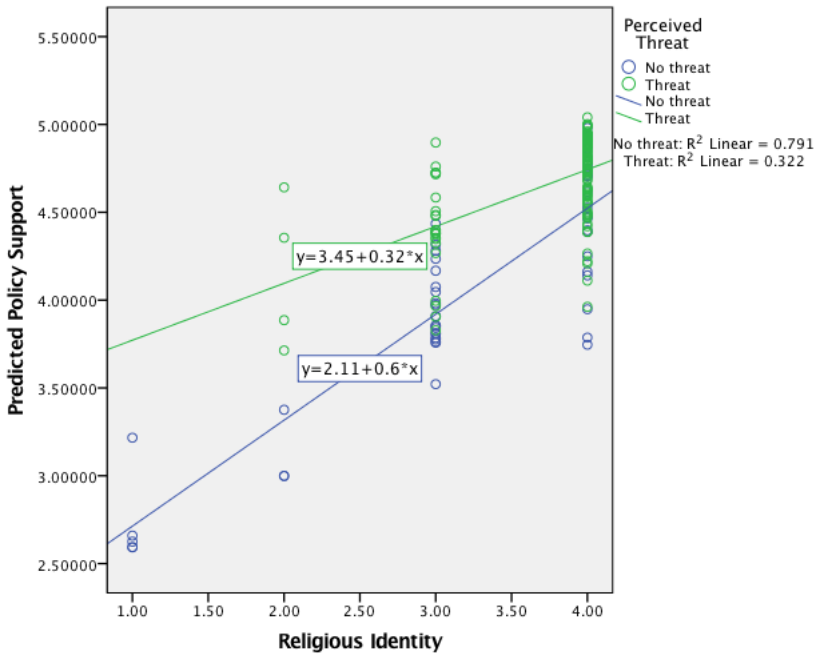
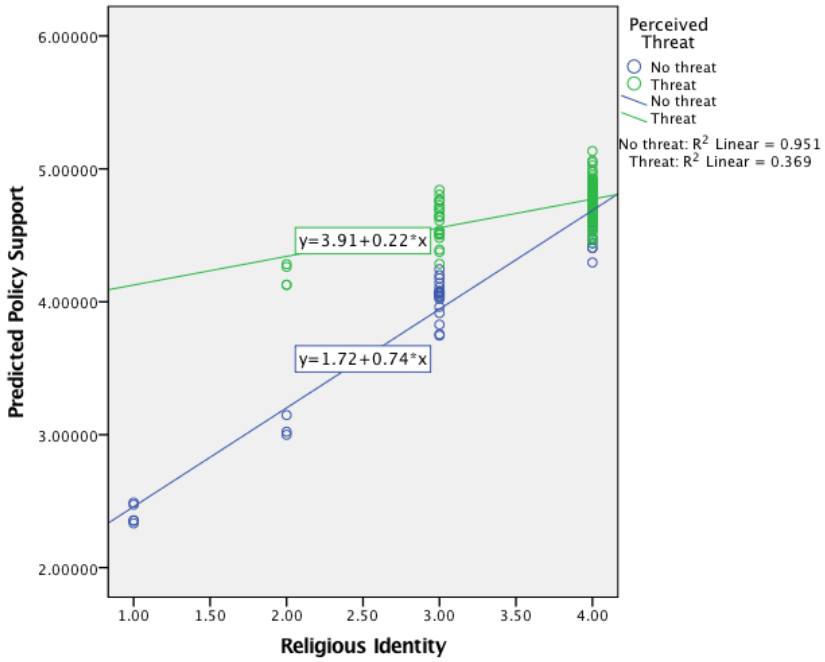


Figure 4.4 How Threat and Religious Identity Impact Predicted Policy Support for Teaching the Christian Beliefs of America's Founders Among Strong Republicans



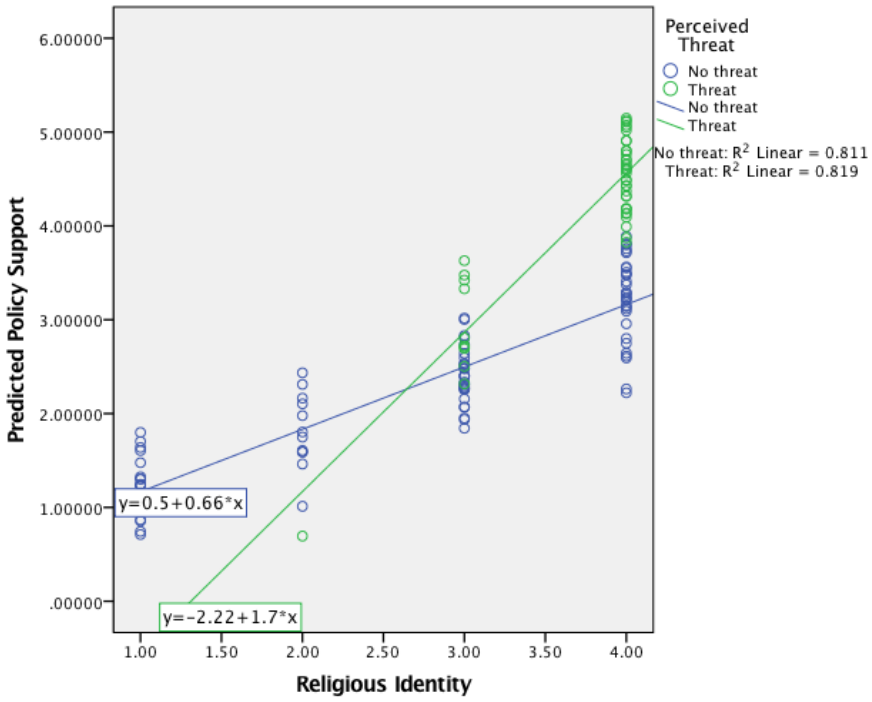
The model for strong Democrats shows both similarities and differences. Looking at the model of strong Democrat attitudes toward Bible classes in public high schools, religious belonging is similarly important as for Republicans for both evangelical and non-evangelical Protestants, leading to a more supportive policy position. Catholicism is not associated with a more supportive policy position among strong Democrats, though. This would make sense if the Catholic effect among Republicans evidences an alignment of some religiously conservative Catholics with the socially conservative politics of the Republican Party, a phenomenon also noticed by Hunter (1991). In other words, these Catholics share the same church name but are qualitatively different key aspects of belief. As with Republicans, neither church attendance nor Biblical literalism is associated with greater policy support among strong Democrats.

Religious identity and threat look different among strong Democrats. Only the model for Bible classes returns significant results; p-values for these variables inched beyond the 0.1 level of significance in the model for teaching the Founder's religious beliefs. In the Bible classes model, religious identity and threat are both associated with higher policy support (despite the negative regression coefficient for threat, which is due to the interaction term).[14] However, while threat's effect was most evident among strong Republicans with weak religious identities, the opposite is the case among Democrats. Threat amplifies the effect of a strong religious identity on policy support and is nearly imperceptible among strong Democrats with weak religious identities.

This is most easily seen by comparing the scatter plots and fit lines between strong Republicans and strong Democrats. In Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4 of strong Republican policy support, the fit lines for those who perceive threat begin higher along the y-axis and have gentler slopes than the lines for those who do not perceive threat. In Figure 4.5, the inverse occurs for strong Democrats. Here, the fit line for those who experience threat has a much steeper slope, and threat's effect is felt stronger among those with strong religious identities. Almost no strong Democrats with weak religious identities perceive threat, which makes the fit line a little deceptive. Aside from a few outlying data points among weak religious identifiers, the steepness of the slope is due almost entirely to higher policy support among strong identifiers who perceive threat.

[14] Note that coefficients of the lower order variables are uninterpretable aside from the interaction coefficient. While threat has a negative regression coefficient, this must be viewed together with the interaction term. The scatter plot more intuitively shows threat to be associated with stronger policy support, but this varies systematically according to the strength of an individual's religious identity.

Figure 4.5 How Threat and Religious Identity Impact Predicted Policy Support for Bible Classes in Texas Public High Schools <u>Among Strong Democrats</u>



Among strong Democrats with the strongest religious identity, the perception of threat increases predicted policy support from 3.14 to 4.58, for an increase of 46%. As a result, the predicted policy support of those with strong religious identities and who perceive threat to religion looks fairly similar for strong Democrats (4.58) and strong Republicans (4.73). The perception of threat leads these strong Democrats to more resemble Republicans than the balance of their own party. This is all the more interesting when noting the statistical significance of party identification in the overall model, which shows Democratic Party identification to lead to lower support for these policies. Thus, these data show that threat and religious identity can cause even the strongest Democrats to buck their party trend.

Threat Among the Non-Religious and Unaffiliated

Do the non-religious and unaffiliated also perceive threat when it comes to matters of religion? The regression results in Table 4.3 suggest that they do. When the model is fitted for only the non-religious and unaffiliated (sans the traditional religion measures), the perception of threat has a statistically significant negative effect on policy attitudes toward both Bible classes and teaching the Founders' religious beliefs.

Figure 4.6 shows predicted policy support for those who perceive threat and those who do not. When the nonreligious and unaffiliated perceive threat, their predicted support for these policies moves from approximately neutral to decidedly negative. Support for Bible classes in public high schools moves from 3.14 to 1.31, and support for teaching the Christian beliefs of the American Founders moves from 2.93 to 1.38. These results may seem unsurprising at first glance but are noteworthy for a few reasons. We know little about what structures the attitudes of the nonreligious and unaffiliated. Do religious factors such as beliefs, identity, and threat affect their political attitudes, or are they simply agnostic to such matters entirely? Given that this is a growing segment within the American electorate, understanding the dynamics of their politics is increasingly important.

In addition to threat, party identification has a statistically significant impact on policy support, in line with results for the general population. Unfortunately, these data do not allow for an assessment of religious identity among the non-religious and unaffiliated. The measure used in this study is the importance of religion to one's life. Among religious respondents, this demonstrates variation in religion's salience.

However, for those who are not religious, the measure is a misfit when considering that the question of interest is the salience of their identity as a nonreligious person. Finding better ways to assess this identity for the non-religious and unaffiliated is an area that deserves future research, particularly given their steady rise within the population.[15]

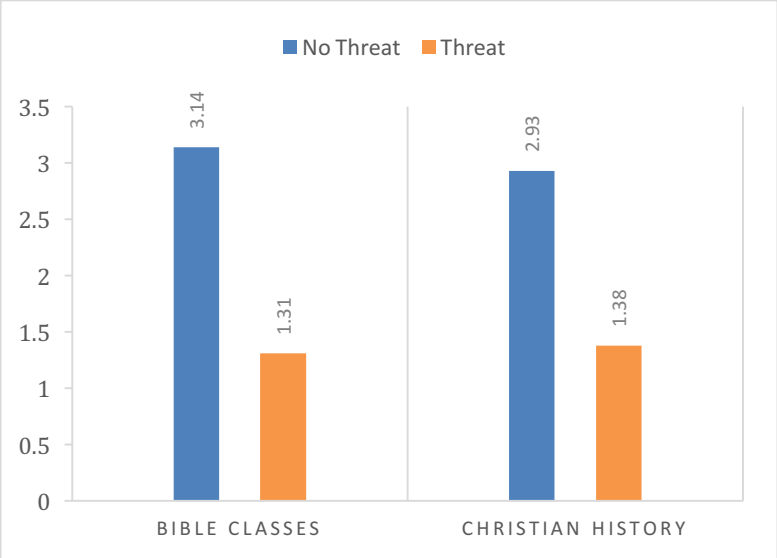
Table 4.3 Models of Attitudes toward Curriculum Changes Among the Non-Religious and Unaffiliated

	Bible Class	Christian History
Constant	2.670***	2.471***
	(.588)	(.606)
Party ID	.211***	.285***
	(.065)	(.068)
Education	-.042	-.116
	(.083)	(.086)
Income	-.020	-.043
	(.032)	(.033)
Age	.000	.007
	(.008)	(.008)
Female	.033	-.150
	(.224)	(.232)
Black	.036	-.108
	(.358)	(.369)
Hispanic	-.039	.485
	(.340)	(.351)
Urbanicity	.063	-.392
	(.253)	(.264)
Threat	-1.498***	-1.004***
	(.251)	(.261)
Adjusted R2	.338	.341
N	138	135

* p < 0.10; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01

[15] The Pew Research Center's *2014 Religious Landscape Study* found that almost one quarter of the adult population claims no religious affiliation, up from 16% in the 2007 study. About one-third of Millennials are now religiously unaffiliated according to the study.

Figure 4.6 Predicted Policy Support Among the Non-Religious and Unaffiliated



Conclusions

This chapter utilizes original data from a statewide survey of Texans to offer additional support to the dissertation's overarching hypotheses that religious identity and threat play central roles in structuring political attitudes. Three notable findings emerge from these data.

First, when looking at attitudes toward policies that create Bible classes in Texas public high schools and revise the state's curriculum to teach the Christian religious beliefs of America's Founders, strong religious identity and the perception of threat toward religion do lead to higher levels of policy support. A statistically significant interaction between religious identity and threat also lend additional support to the findings in Chapter 3, that the moderating effect of threat on religious identity matters more among those with a weak religious identity than among those with strong ones. This

is particularly helpful because the research in Chapter 3 relied on an experiment and a student survey, whereas this research draws on a statewide survey.

Second, when looking at strong partisans, the relationship between religious identity and threat manifests similarly among strong Republicans as the general population. However, among strong Democrats, threat's disproportionate positive impact inverts from those with weak religious identities to those with strong identities. While Democratic party identification is associated with lower support for these policies, the level of support rivals that of Republicans for strong Democrats who also have a strong religious identity and perceive threat toward religion. The perception of threat among these respondents makes their policy support look more like Republicans than their fellow Democrats. The party analysis also revealed a partisan difference in Catholicism. Catholics who are strong Republicans are more likely to support these policies, whereas Catholicism has no effect among strong Democrats.

Finally, this chapter finds that threat also exists among the non-religious and religiously unaffiliated, and moves these respondents from neutral opinion to strong opposition to these policies.

These results all support the dissertation's overarching hypotheses. The chapter also suggests areas ripe for further research, such as parsing the partisan differences within Catholicism. While threat toward non-religious perspectives does appear to affect opinion toward these policies for the non-religious and unaffiliated, future research is necessary to establish a similar relationship between threat and non-religion as a social identity. While these data are extremely helpful in allowing a real-world examination of

this dissertation's hypotheses, they only look at one policy domain. It is likely that the impact of religious identity and threat differ across domains, which is another area in which future research could be particularly helpful.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implications

An Enduring Feature

This dissertation investigates an enduring feature of American politics. From the arrival of the earliest European settlers, American politics have evidenced the tension of dominion and pluralism. Winthrop's band of Puritans embarked on a journey across the Atlantic to free themselves from the authority of an established church with which they disagreed. The threat of sanctions on their rights—and perhaps even lives—by political and ecclesiastical authorities impinged their religious conscience to the point of separation. With their departure to America, they envisaged a city upon a hill. Yet, their vision required not liberty, but conformity. They did not institute a sanctuary where persons could enjoy liberty of conscience but rather a new established church according to their own precepts; an ironic replication of the very situation from which they fled, swapping only the rules and persons of authority.

From this nascent moment in history, American politics have displayed the intertwining religious themes of identity and threat, amidst the push and pull of dominion and pluralism. What to do with the minorities who dare not conform to the city's vision? Dissenters like Anne Hutchinson (banished) and Mary Dyer (hanged) found out all too well the Puritan project's limits on conscience, leading other colonial visionaries like Roger Williams and William Penn to create religious safe spaces. With the ratification of the Bill of Rights, America began to write a new chapter in political history, severing the

official tie between church and state and giving rise to a new and more powerful voluntary religion that would bring about "the churching of America."[1]

Rather than ending state-church privilege, it may be best to view disestablishment as transforming it from *de jure* to *de facto* status, until at least the Separationist Era (the late 1940s through the 1970s) of the Supreme Court, when generic Protestant sensibilities began to recede from social dominance.[2] Tension between dominion and pluralism remained a notable feature of American political life, evidenced in legislative acts, social norms and movements, and acts of violence both physical and verbal. Roman Catholics, Jews, and other religious minorities experienced remarkable discrimination. Nativists like the Know Nothings openly attacked and murdered Catholics, including the infamous Bloody Monday election day riot in Louisville, Kentucky. The Ku Klux Klan and other Protestants unleashed unreserved and widespread fearmongering in response to Catholic Al Smith's nomination for the presidency. Policies, now overturned, curtailed the rights of Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and atheists.[3] Jews founded the Anti-Defamation League to combat widespread antisemitism. In the aftermath of the

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[1] This phrase is borrowed from Stark and Finke (2005), who argue that market forces of voluntary religion led to higher levels of religiosity in the U.S. See also Hatch (1989).

[2] Beginning in the late 1940s, the court began to give a more expansive reading to the restrictions imposed by the Establishment Clause on state action, e.g., *McCollum v. Board* (1948), *Engle v. Vitale* (1962), *Abingdon v. Schempp* (1963), *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971). See Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2014, Chapter 4) for further discussion. They view these cases as roughly bookending a Separationist Era in court rulings that tended to curtail public expressions of religion in public institutions. At the same time, the rise of progressive social movements challenged the *de facto* privilege that Protestant Christianity had enjoyed in the approximately century and a half since disestablishment.

[3] For example, *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925); *Cantwell v. Connecticut* (1940); *West Virginia v. Barnette* (1943); Missouri Executive Order 44 (1838), aka. the Extermination Order, rescinded on June 25, 1976.

September 11, 2001, attacks on the U.S. by Islamic extremists, American Muslims experienced death threats, mosques set ablaze, and Quran burnings. Even Sikhs were gunned down in their temple by a neo-Nazi.[4] In more recent years, evangelical Protestants and conservative Roman Catholics have fought legislative and judicial battles on behalf of public expressions of religion, business owners who refuse services when events and behaviors violate their religious conscience, and the exclusion of certain medical coverage from employer provided health plans for religious reasons.[5]

To be fair, the story of religion in American public life is not all so troubling. As with most legacies, the Puritan influence and Protestant Christianity's long held social privilege present mixed legacies, with troubling aspects comingled with good. In fact, the entrepreneurial spirit of voluntary Protestantism embodied by the Second Great Awakening helped to shed the closed provincialism from Winthrop's vision for a city upon a hill and transform it into a new image that aligned religious faith with the greatest ideals of Americanism. This is the religion that Tocqueville, the consummate student of democratic flourishing, found such an intriguing and indispensable pillar of the American experiment's early success. Evangelical reformers set in place sweeping social movements to abolish slavery, reform prisons, improve public education, and provide for the needy. Social Gospellers sought to impose moral restraints on the market economy and industrialization, end child labor, improve the conditions of workers, and clean up the

[4] On August 5, 2012, a white supremacist opened fire at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, killing six worshipers.

[5] For example, The Equal Access Act of 1984; The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993; *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* (2014); *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* (accepted by the U.S. Supreme Court for the 2017 term).

squalid tenements of the inner city.[6] Theological imagination provided language and stamina to the Civil Rights movement, so that Martin Luther King, Jr. could identify his work with the Apostle Paul's answer to the Macedonian call for aid and lay claim on behalf of black Americans to the very same God-given rights articulated in the Declaration of Independence.[7]

In his thoughtful and moderated critique of religion's place in modern American political life, Jeffrey Stout (2004, 300) opines that:

> Among the most important democratic movements in American history were Abolitionism and the Civil Rights movement; both of these were based largely in the religious communities. Religious colleges and seminaries provided strong support for both movements. If religious premises had not been adduced in support of them, it is unlikely that either movement would have resulted in success.

Religion in American political life has been a dramatic force for the betterment of humanity, and at the same time it has engendered great fear on the part of dissenters, especially when threatening the temporal sword. The irony must not be lost that Martin Luther King, Jr. was writing to a group of ministers, and the fiercest proponents of American slavery sat on church vestries.

We see again religion's ever-present tension between dominion and pluralism in American politics; something that Reinhold Niebuhr would almost certainly term an

[6] Lambert (2008) presents a fairly concise overview.
[7] "Letter from Birmingham Jail;" Acts 16-18.

ironic situation, where a nation birthed by conceptions of religious freedom and political liberty would produce an environment in which religion functions as both sword and ploughshare. From the first European settlers to the present day, religion has featured prominently in some of America's most controversial policy debates, many of which involve fundamental questions of political rights that directly affect individuals' lives and liberties. This dissertation argues that religion's role in these controversies extends beyond a matter of affiliation, or confessional predisposition, or religiosity, to a deep-seated social identity that emerges through self-identification with a particular religious category; that the perception of threat can cause this identity to rise in salience; and, much like we have seen with other forms of group consciousness, this can have a powerful effect on the structure of political attitudes.

In the time since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the power of religion to motivate attitudes and behaviors has become increasingly evident. Understanding how religion functions as a political determinant is especially important at a time in which America grows more diverse, pluralistic, and globally connected. Growing pluralism and heightened political division along religious lines exacerbate religion's prominence in some of our national conversation's most contentious and controversial topics, and challenge the political trust and liberal values that maintain democratic stability in the U.S. By highlighting the role of religious identity and its responsiveness to threat, this dissertation works toward a more thorough rendering of the way in which religion structures political attitudes and affects our democratic life as a nation. Such knowledge can open new opportunities to find understanding amidst conflict and commonalities amidst deep differences, promoting the kind of hope, faith, love, and forgiveness that

Niebuhr believed so central to the salvation of American civilization from blindness to "hatred and vainglory."[8]

Contributions to the Literature

Research shows that Americans are increasingly divided along religious lines, which has spurred greater interest in the way in which religion structures political attitudes and behaviors. However, little research has considered the political effects of religion as a social identity. This is a notable omission considering that research on race and national identity have shown group identity and perceived threat to have strong effects on the views and behaviors of group members. This dissertation offers contributions to the literature that bridge this gap in understanding by bringing religion into conversation with research on the political relevance of other social identities, developing a framework for continued political science research on religion as a social identity, and ultimately working toward a more robust picture of religion's causal impact on American politics.

Chapter 1 contributes a theoretical perspective that views religion as a social identity. Drawing on social identity theory and its previous application in political science research to other social categories, this view suggests that religion is a meaningful social category through which individuals can develop a psychological attachment based on shared characteristics, experiences, ideas, or beliefs. Through this sense of attachment to a social group, an individual can also derive a sense of personal

[8] *The Irony of American History*, pp. 63, 174.

identity, forming a social identity. Social identities allow individuals to utilize in-group versus out-group distinctions to locate themselves within their social and political contexts. Social identities also enable individuals to perceive threats to the group, which can elevate a social identity's salience and alter its causal impact on politics. This amends the literature's predominant understanding of religion's politically relevant facets, which include religious belonging, believing, and behaving, but do not account for the sense of psychological attachment one may feel toward their religion as a social identity. This also enables a more dynamic conceptualization of religion as responsive to changing circumstances in the political environment.

Chapter 2 operationalizes the concept of religion as a social identity. It adapts survey questions from research on other social identities to develop six different measurement approaches for religious identity. Analyzing them alongside measures of religious belonging, belief, and behavior, it shows religious identity to be related but not too strongly correlated, suggesting that religious identity taps a distinct dimension of religion. Moreover, religious identity demonstrates predictive power when placed alongside these traditional religion measures in models of opinion, causing some to lose statistical significance. This chapter's added value to the literature therefore includes the development of reliable measures of religious identity, which can be used to replicate and extend this dissertation's line of research and for side-by-side comparison with other social identities. It also contributes to a larger measurement conversation on social identity, which Huddy (2003, 522) notes is "troubled by a lack of consistent measurement, divergent measurement approaches… and relatively few studies that have attempted to cross validate measures."

Chapter 3 establishes the relationship between religious identity and threat as predictors of political attitudes. It shows threat and religious identity to have independent and statistically significant effects on political attitudes. It also shows threat to have a moderating effect on religious identity, which matters more for those with weaker religious identities than for those with stronger ones. This suggests that threat acts like a politicizing force for religious identity among those for whom weaker identities might otherwise hold little causal influence in structuring their attitudes. Higher levels of religious identity and threat lead to more extreme attitudes, which is in line with expectations from the literature. However, threat does not necessarily direct these attitudes against other groups through more protectionist or retaliatory preferences. This departs from expectations in the literature based on research on race and national identity. While the results on this count were only modest and suggestive, it does raise the possibility that religion can engender democratically-affirming responses to threat.

Chapter 4 uses more representative data to confirm the independent effects of religious identity and threat on policy attitudes, as well as threat's moderating effect on religious identity. It also introduces two additional findings. Looking at strong partisans, it finds that the moderating effect of threat on religious identity among Republicans (as with the general population) is felt the strongest by those with weaker religious identities and decreases in magnitude as religious identity strengthens. However, the inverse is true for Democrats, with threat's greatest moderating effect being seen among those with stronger religious identities. In fact, the opinions of these Democrats most closely resemble their Republican counterparts than their fellow partisans, with strong support for religious content in public schools. These new findings cohere with understandings in

the literature that polarization along religious lines could produce partisan differences in how religious identity and threat function. These differences are also evidenced among Catholics, with Catholic affiliation having a statistically significant impact on the attitudes of strong Republicans but not Democrats, which speaks to diversity and partisan cleavages within Catholicism. Chapter 4 also finds evidence that, when threat is perceived by the nonreligious and unaffiliated, it has a statistically significant impact on opinion in the opposite direction of those who are religious.

As with any research project, acknowledging limitations and opportunities for future development are also important. At the onset, this dissertation explicitly sought a conceptualization of religion that is generalizable across tradition. Data limitations made it difficult to more fully explore this. While the theoretical approach develops with general applicability in mind, empirical analysis is limited to Christians in Chapters 2 and 3. Better data in Chapter 4 enable a look at the entire population and a limited look at the nonreligious, but data limitations and small sample sizes forestall a more thorough examination. The findings here suggest that religious identity and threat do hold across religious tradition and warrant additional research to better explicate a more general theory and discover how these processes might operate among different religious traditions.

The policy domains explored in this dissertation present another data limitation. Chapter 2 looks specifically at two public policies: attitudes toward abortion and prayer at public school events. Chapter 3 also looks at attitudes toward prayer at public school events. Chapter 4 remains in the public education orbit, examining attitudes toward changes in the state education curriculum designed to increase the presence of religion in

the public school classroom. These are policies in which religion has been found to hold particular relevance in structuring attitudes. Future research should develop an understanding of religious identity and threat's political relevance across multiple policy domains. Might religious identity prove relevant in some policy domains and not others? Might the emergence of threat in a particular domain activate its political relevance? How might these processes respond to changing circumstances in the political environment across domains? These are interesting questions that could be developed by further research. Moreover, how do these processes extend from political attitudes to behaviors? We know, for example, that religion plays an important role in promoting political participation and civic engagement. How might these processes extend to vote choices in the context of elections? This presents a logical extension of the research begun in this dissertation.

These aforementioned areas for further research also present an opportunity to more thoroughly explore the partisan differences that emerged in Chapter 4. Two were especially noteworthy: the inverse moderating effects of threat on religious identity for strong Democrats vis-à-vis strong Republicans, and the emergence of Catholicism as a relevant predictor among strong Republicans but not strong Democrats. Further research should explore the underlying reasons for differences such as these, their underlying causes, and political consequences. This could bring additional insight to our understanding of religious and partisan cleavages in the electorate.

Two Normative Responses to This Research

In conclusion, it may also be worth connecting this research to some broader normative considerations about religion in American political life. Theologians and theorists have long argued about the rightful place of religion in politics. Entire books (and careers) have been spent on this issue, so these closing pages present a far from fully developed treatment of this topic. Still, this dissertation's empirical findings offer some relevant implications for this important and ongoing conversation, and warrant at least a cursory attempt to outline some normative responses for consideration.

First, let us assume for a moment this dissertation's keystone finding that religion is a social identity. This speaks to the very way in which religion is conceptualized. For many Americans, religion is more than a category assigned by a demographer or even membership in a group. Rather, it entails a deep-seated and personal connection between an individual and a religious group, from which an individual derives, to a certain extent, one's very sense of self identity. Marry to that a second key finding, that this social identity has significant impact on the way in which religion structures attitudes and affects political reasoning. In this way, religion is very much part of democratic decision making in the U.S. Moreover, under circumstances of threat, this research suggests that religion becomes even more a part of the decision making process, elevating the salience and causal impact of religious identity, even for those for whom religion is otherwise a more weakly held identity.

Some object to this situation as highly problematic and opposed to the ideals of political liberalism, John Rawls among the most prominent of such critics. For Rawls,

when religion plays a major role in decision making, democratic society risks outcomes based on values that lack consensus, which may be biased against some citizens and could undermine democratic stability. He proposes instead a "political" conception of justice that is "freestanding" and rooted in shared democratic values of fairness.

> The point of the ideal of public reason is that citizens are to conduct their fundamental discussions within the framework of what each regards as a political conception of justice based on values that the other can reasonably be expected to endorse and each is, in good faith, prepared to defend that conception so understood (Rawls 2005, 226).

This proposal places bounds on the extent to which religion can and should be part of the democratic conversation—bounds that may prove too difficult given this dissertation's key findings. Consider for a moment the conceptualization of religion as a social identity, with the operative word being *identity*. This implies that religion may be so intimately tied to a person's sense of self, self-categorization within society, and decision making as a citizen, that placing such bounds on its democratic participation may be an unworkable proposition.

Workability aside, another concern is the desirability of such a proposal. If anything, more recent developments in public attitudes suggest a growing appreciation and respect for a person's identity, with laws and social norms creating space for diverse identities to receive welcome in American society. This dissertation suggests the presence (and power) of religious identities, which may exist not only across religious tradition but also for the nonreligious and unaffiliated. Should social and political welcome be any

different for these identities, or would that deny their dignity by requiring a person to alter or deny their sense of self in order to fully participate in public life?

An alternative proposal would be to consider this dissertation's key findings to reinforce the depth of pluralism's imprint on American democracy, and develop a public culture of tolerance toward religion that respects the diverse contributions of many voices as coequal dialogical partners in pursuit of common good. Stephen Carter (1993, 230-231) puts it well:

> What is needed is not a requirement that the religiously devout choose a form of dialogue that liberalism accepts, but that liberalism develop a politics that accepts whatever form of dialogue a member of the public offers. Epistemic diversity, like diversity of other kinds, should be cherished, not ignored, and certainly not abolished. What is needed, then, is a willingness to *listen*, not because the speaker has *the right voice* but because the speaker has *the right to speak*. Moreover, the willingness to listen must hold out the possibility that the speaker is saying something worth listening to; to do less is to trivialize the forces that shape the moral convictions of tens of millions of Americans.

This dissertation's findings suggest that Carter may be too modest in referring simply to the religiously "devout," but that religious identity—especially under conditions of threat—can have a broader impact on the structure of public opinion.

In essence, one normative response to this dissertation would be to adopt a "glass half full" reaction to the capacity of American democracy to accommodate a vibrant religious pluralism even in the shadow of 9/11. To be clear, religious pluralism presents a challenge for a democratic society. Religion can inspire intolerance, hate, and even

murder; but it has also proven a force for social good and democratic flourishing. Religion has been shown to nurture civil society and promote political participation (Putnam 2000; Verba et al. 1995), and democratic stability and economic development (Woodberry 2012), and Neuhaus (1984) considers it an independent moral check on state action and the only sure check on totalitarianism. As noted earlier, Stout views religion as inseparable from some critical advances in human rights. Would we be better off without it? He poetically argues no:

> We should not imagine the life-giving sources on which we depend as something essentially alien to American democratic modernity. That stream is in us and of us when we engage in our democratic practices. Democracy, then, is misconceived when considered to be a desert landscape hostile to whatever life-giving waters of culture and tradition might still flow through it. Democracy is better construed as the name appropriate to the currents themselves in this particular time and place (Stout 2004, 308).

Of course, religion's social benefits are not Rawls's chief concern so much as its capacity in the other direction. However, if this dissertation's findings raise red flags about his proposal's workability, it might also suggest some relief for his fears. In Chapter 3, there appears no evidence that perceived threat to a majority religious group leads to higher support for policies that privilege that group (Christianity in this case) at the expense of the minority (Muslims). The policy response was instead democratically-affirming, with greater support for both Christian *and* Muslim prayers in response to a perceived threat to Christianity's social status. Although modest, this is one of the

dissertation's most intriguing findings, and one that I hope receives future attention. It also segues to a second normative response to this dissertation's findings.

Any call for a religion-affirming public square should dovetail with a call to nurture democratically-affirming public theologies within faith communities. As my former ethics professor and rabble rouser, the late James Dunn, argued, "All true freedom is in a real sense religious freedom. It is that which replicates the Divine in all of us that makes us response-able, responsible and free" (Dunn and Cothen 2000, 7). The Rawlsian fear is not without cause. Religious actors have too often ignored their democratic responsibility; which, as Dunn would argue, is also a religious responsibility. As a result, religion can manifest in triumphant rather than democratic ways. As an example, Richard Mouw (2010, 161) recounts the words of the Dutch theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper before a university audience in Amsterdam, "There is not one square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out, 'This is mine! This belongs to me!'" Such an approach to public policies could perhaps work in Winthrop's Puritan colony, but even a generous reading of Kuyper's approach would not work in pluralist modern America. Not without alienating a massive number of Americans. Not without the dangerous potential of trampling on the rights of others. Not without disregard for any semblance of democratic responsibility.

For this reason, Mouw suggests introducing the triumphant Kuyper to the public engagement modeled by Mother Teresa. Word-for-word, Mouw suggests that Mother Teresa would have no objection to any part of Kuyper's famous "every square inch" manifesto, but that:

> She knew that many of those square inches are presently occupied by people with stinking, rotting flesh, by grieving parents, by frightened children—the abused, the abandoned, the persecuted and the desperately poor. And she was convinced that our "claiming" those places in the name of Christ means that we must go out to join them "in the distressing disguise" as he makes the agony of the suffering ones his very own. (168)

Why should faith communities assume the responsibility to nurture democratically-affirming public theologies? Because they have the capacity to inspire and shape the sensibilities of the faithful. Religion as a social identity suggests that the contours of the religious group—its values, beliefs, concerns, characteristics, and how they are practiced and modeled—can inform an individual's own sense of identity. In the context of a pluralist society, democratically-affirming public theologies can champion religion's capacity for social betterment and curb its capacity for harm. They can uphold in one hand a religious tradition's particular vision for human flourishing, while holding in the other a kind of Niebuhrian humility:

> in which the urgencies of the struggle are subordinated to a sense of awe before the vastness of the historical drama in which we are jointly involved; to a sense of modesty about the virtue, wisdom and power available to us for the resolution of its perplexities; to a sense of contrition about the common human frailties and foibles which lie at the foundation of both the enemy's demonry and our vanities;

> and to a sense of gratitude for the divine mercies which are promised to those who humble themselves (Niebuhr 1952, 174).[9]

A democratically-affirming public theology allows the individual to stand in between these two arms of moral vision and responsible humility, and embody the prophet Micah's admonition to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" as democratic citizens and as neighbors.[10]

This is *not* the kind of democratic engagement about which James Hunter wrote in his 1991 book, *Culture Wars*. (Perhaps just as telling is the title of his subsequent book, *Before the Shooting Begins*, which sought to rescue democracy from the former.) A short time after the release of *Culture Wars*, former presidential candidate Pat Buchanan was invited to address the Republican National Convention, in which he drew on Hunter's terminology to cast the 1992 Presidential Election as:

> a religious war…. a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as was the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America. And in that struggle for the soul of America, Clinton and Clinton are on the other side, and George Bush is on our side (Buchanan 1992).

Hunter recalled, "when I heard the speech I was absolutely appalled… it is one thing to analyze the cultural and political landscape as a culture war; it is another thing, quite another thing, to use this as a call to arms" (Hunter 2007).

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[9] Niebuhr spoke specifically here about the struggle between Soviet-style communism and American-style liberalism, but as with so much of Niebuhr, his words find wide-ranging application.

[10] Micah 6:8, *New Revised Standard Version*.

With the retrospect of time, he has considered further the public engagement of persons like Buchanan in the decades since publishing *Culture Wars*. Also telling, his response has transformed from sociological analysis to a sociologically-informed theological argument about how to make the world a better place by reconciling modern pluralism with religious faithfulness; about how to be simultaneously faithful as a democratic citizen and faithful to one's religion. Hunter draws parallels between pluralist modern America and the Babylonian exile of the Hebrews, where the exilic community was instructed by the Prophet Jeremiah to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."[11] Rather than domination, or conquest, or retaliation, Hunter terms the prophet's call a theology of "faithful presence," where "commitment to the new city commons is a commitment of the community of faith to the highest ideals and practices of human flourishing in a pluralistic world" (279).

From this dissertation emerges a picture of "the politics of the people of God" that are structured in no small way by religion as a powerful social identity from which individuals can derive a fundamental sense of self, an identity that is sensitive to its political circumstances and responsive to perceived threats. In a time of growing pluralism and ever-deepening religious and partisan cleavages, this could portend dark days for democratic stability. But, history has also shown the capacity of religion to nurture democracy and advance the cause of justice. This dissertation also suggests that religion is able to offer a democratically-affirming response to the threats associated with

[11] Jeremiah 29:7, *New Revised Standard Version*.

social and demographic change. Promoting a religion-affirming public square and nurturing democratically-affirming public theologies within communities of faith do not promise some kind of utopian future. But they do extend from this dissertation's findings as reasonable responses to the serious challenges and deep differences that we face in pluralist modern America.

As we face these challenges, we should also remember that it is not the first time America has confronted deep differences and emerged whole on the other side. President Lincoln's words are just as prescient today as they were when the darkening clouds of civil war gathered on the horizon:

> We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory will swell when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.[12]

[12] Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address, March 4, 1861.

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